



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	Ind.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas-Kameesak	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Second Report

MLA Carla Compton (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the second report on the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 22, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divulgations faites dans l'intérêt public (protection des divulgateurs d'actes répréhensibles)*
- **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba*
- **Bill (No. 39)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba et la Loi sur l'administration des impôts et des taxes et divers impôts et taxes*
- **Bill (No. 46)** – *The Securities Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières*

- **Bill (No. 51)** – *The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act / Loi sur la gouvernance de l'intelligence artificielle et de la cybersécurité au sein du secteur public*

Committee Membership

- *MLA COMPTON*
- *Hon. Min. MOROZ*
- *Mr. NARTH*
- *Mr. OXENHAM*
- *Hon. Min. SALA*
- *Mrs. STONE*

Your Committee elected MLA COMPTON as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 14)** – The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divulgations faites dans l'intérêt public (protection des divulgateurs d'actes répréhensibles):*

David Grant, Private citizen

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 20)** – The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba:*

Brett Kristjanson, 10013580 Manitoba Ltd.

Guildo Theriault, Private citizen

Geoff Hill, Private citizen

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 39)** – The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba et la Loi sur l'administration des impôts et des taxes et divers impôts et taxes:*

David Grant, Private citizen

Brett Kristjanson, 10013580 Manitoba Ltd.

Guildo Theriault, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 46)** – *The Securities Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières*:

David Grant, Private citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba*:

James Beddome, Manitoba Eco-Network

Your Committee received the following three written submissions on **Bill (No. 39)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba et la Loi sur l'administration des impôts et des taxes et divers impôts et taxes*:

Dirk Wang, NewDecade Energy Ltd.

Scott Brooker, Private citizen

James Beddome, Manitoba Eco-Network

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 51)** – *The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act / Loi sur la gouvernance de l'intelligence artificielle et de la cybersécurité au sein du secteur public*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Heather Fast, Manitoba Eco-Network

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divulgations faites dans l'intérêt public (protection des divulgateurs d'actes répréhensibles)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 39)** – *The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba et la Loi sur l'administration des impôts et des taxes et divers impôts et taxes*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 46)** – *The Securities Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 51)** – *The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act / Loi sur la gouvernance de l'intelligence artificielle et de la cybersécurité au sein du secteur public*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

MLA Compton: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Sorry. Is there leave of the House to accommodate one of our ministerial statements, because our guests, which are ambassadors from French countries, are not here just yet?

Is there leave of the House to be able to do the ministerial or return to the ministerial after all of members' statements?

The Speaker: Is there leave of the House to return to ministerial statements to accommodate the fact that the ambassadors have not yet arrived?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Back to committee reports.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Fifth Report

MLA Robert Loiselle (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fifth report on the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 22, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Consumer Protection Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur*
- **Bill (No. 48)** – *The Real Property Amendment and Planning Amendment Act (Land Conveyed for Public Purposes) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire (biens-fonds cédés à des fins publiques)*
- **Bill (No. 49)** – *The Business Practices Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales*

Committee Membership

- Mr. BRAR
- MLA DEVGAN
- Mr. GUENTER
- MLA LOISELLE
- Mr. NESBITT
- Hon. Min. SANDHU

Your Committee elected MLA LOISELLE as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA DEVGAN as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Hon. Mr. KOSTYSHYN

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following seven presentations on **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Consumer Protection Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur*:*

Anthony Rosborough, Private citizen

John Graham, Retail Council of Canada

Rick Vincent, Piston Ring Service

Dean Harder, National Farmers Union – Manitoba

Warrington Ellacott, Whirlpool Canada LP

Denis Cloutier, Automotive Trades Association of Manitoba

David Grant, Private citizen

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 48)** – *The Real Property Amendment and Planning Amendment Act (Land Conveyed for Public Purposes) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire (biens-fonds cédés à des fins publiques)*:*

David Grant, Private citizen

*Your Committee heard the following four presentations on **Bill (No. 49)** – *The Business Practices Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales*:*

Josh Tabish, Chamber of Progress

John Graham, Retail Council of Canada

Zainab Mansaray, Canada-Africa Relation Enterprises Inc.

David Grant, Private citizen

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following nine written submissions on **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Consumer Protection Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur*:*

Emily Holtby, Automotive Industries Association of Canada

John Pearce, Canadian Repair Coalition

Lucas Malinowski, Global Automakers of Canada

Rémi Moreau, Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers

Charles Bernard, Canadian Automobile Dealers Association

Meagan Hatch, Electronics Product Stewardship Canada

Alissa Centivany, Private citizen

Ted Rother, Private citizen

Jennifer Steeves, Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Consumer Protection Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 48)** – *The Real Property Amendment and Planning Amendment Act (Land Conveyed for Public Purposes) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire (biens-fonds cédés à des fins publiques)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 49)** – *The Business Practices Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

MLA Loiseau: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross), that the report on the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: I have a document to table for the House.

I am pleased to table the annual report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ending March 31, 2026. Copies of the report will be sent to members directly by email.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Week of the Early Childhood Educator

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I rise today to recognize the 35th annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator, taking place next week from April 26 to May 2. This week is a chance to celebrate early childhood educators: their care, their professionalism and the difference they make for children, families and local communities across Manitoba.

Established in 1992 by the Manitoba Child Care Association, this week has become a valued Manitoba tradition. It recognizes the essential role that early childhood educators play in children's early years, building strong foundations for learning, confidence and well-being.

Early childhood educators bring skill, training and heart to their work. Every day, they create welcoming spaces, indoors and outdoors, where children can explore, play and belong. Their work supports our

shared goal that every child in Manitoba feels safe, respected, included and ready to succeed.

Supporting ECEs is foundational to strengthening and expanding child care, and, Honourable Speaker, our support for ECEs is paying off. Since 2023, the number of certified early childhood educators in the sector has grown by more than 40 per cent. These ECEs help to support the opening of new child-care spaces, and we will continue to build on that progress through our Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care workforce strategy.

In partnership with Canada, our government is making historic investments in our ECE workforce, including the largest wage increase for front-line certified ECEs in Manitoba's history—[interjection] Thank you. We have more training seats in universities and colleges than ever before and additional professional development days to support their profession.

Last fall, we were proud to host the very first Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence, celebrating educators whose leadership and dedication inspires us all.

We are also—pardon me—we also recently introduced a recruit-back incentive to welcome certified ECEs back to the profession, and in just our first few months, Honourable Speaker, it's working. We're welcoming talented, experienced ECEs back into the classrooms.

Within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning, we are proud to have 53 certified ECEs with a collective 700 years of experience in their field, and that expertise helps shape strong programs and services for families across Manitoba. And I'm so grateful to each and every one of them for their work and it's my honour to work for them.

On behalf of the department and my colleagues in the Legislature, thank you to the ECEs across Manitoba. Your dedication, compassion and professionalism gives children the strongest possible start, and your impact is felt every single day.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to provide a list of the names of our guests joining us in the gallery today, including representatives from the Manitoba Child Care Association, department staff who are certified ECEs and some of the recipients of the 2025 Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence.

We are pleased to welcome you to the Legislature—*[interjection]* And we will include them in Hansard, yes, thank you.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Merci, miigwech, merci.

2025 award winners: Ioulia Berdnikova, Laura Remillard, Jean Sangalang, Ginette Simard.

MCCA: Jodie Kehl, executive director; Karen Kowalski, assistant executive director; Tracy Cosser; Cathy Gardiner; Caryn LaFleche; Lynda Raible.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Welcome to our wonderful guests in the gallery today.

Honourable Speaker, I rise today to mark the 35th annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator, which will begin on April 26, which is a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the extraordinary contributions of early childhood educators all across this great province of ours.

Established in 1992 by the Manitoba Child Care Association following the national Caring for a Living study, this week has been proclaimed annually to honour those who care for a living. It acknowledges the essential role early childhood educators play in supporting families, strengthening communities and contributing to the social and economic well-being of our province.

Whether working in early learning and child-care centres or family child-care homes, these professionals provide safe, nurturing and enriching environments where children can grow and thrive. Their work extends far beyond supervision; they foster the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of our youngest citizens during the most formative years of life.

The week provides an important opportunity to reflect on and recognize the dedication, compassion and expertise that early childhood educators bring to their work every day. They are on the front lines of our education system, helping to build strong foundations for lifelong learning and success.

It actually is—a big kudos to former premier Heather Stefanson for amalgamating the two departments, early childhood education with the Department of Education, because it just makes sense.

Our children are our future, and early childhood educators play a vital role in shaping that future.

Our former PC government took an important step to strengthen the early learning and child-care

sector, including participation in the Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, with investments such as expansion and renovation funding for not-for-profit centres. Increased access to training and certification opportunities have helped expanded programs, including francophone educators and ECE upgrading. As well, the introduction of more affordable child care, which made meaningful progress in supporting Manitoba families.

* (13:40)

To all early childhood educators, child-care professionals and student volunteers across Manitoba, thank you. Your dedication, care and commitment make a lasting difference in the lives of children and families each and every day. Our economy grows when we're able to get to work.

This week and every week, we recognize and celebrate your invaluable contributions. Manitoba works when child care works.

Thank you, merci and miigwech, Honourable Speaker.

Groupe des Ambassadeurs et Ambassadrices francophones d'Ottawa

French spoken

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la visite officielle du Groupe des Ambassadrices et Ambassadeurs francophones d'Ottawa dans notre belle province.

Translation

I am pleased to rise today to mark the official visit of the Groupe des Ambassadrices et Ambassadeurs francophones d'Ottawa to our beautiful province.

English

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to mark the official visit of the Groupe d'Ambassadrices et Ambassadeurs francophones d'Ottawa to our beautiful province.

French spoken

Cette semaine, le Manitoba a l'honneur d'accueillir une délégation d'une quinzaine de dignitaires issus d'États membres de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Pour notre gouvernement, cette visite est l'occasion de faire connaître la vitalité de la francophonie manitobaine et de mettre en valeur nos institutions franco-manitobaines.

Translation

This week, Manitoba has the honour of hosting a delegation of 15 dignitaries representing the member states of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. For our government, this visit is an opportunity to affirm the vitality of our Francophonie and to highlight our Franco-Manitoban institutions.

English

For our government, this visit is an opportunity to affirm the vitality of our Francophonie and to highlight our Franco-Manitoban institutions.

French spoken

Nous voulons dialoguer ouvertement avec des partenaires qui jouent un rôle clé au sein de la Francophonie internationale, puisque nous poursuivons activement les démarches pour devenir membre observateur de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

Nous voulons faire rayonner le Manitoba et notre Francophonie bien au-delà de nos frontières.

Translation

We want to have an open dialogue with partners who play a key role in the Organisation de la Francophonie as we are actively pursuing becoming an observer member of this organization.

We want to make Manitoba and our Francophonie shine beyond our borders.

English

We want to have an open dialogue with partners who play a key role in the internal organization of the Francophonie as we are actively pursuing becoming a member of the international Organisation of the Francophonie.

French spoken

La présence des dignitaires cette semaine démontre concrètement l'engagement de notre gouvernement à faire du Manitoba une province véritablement bilingue, où il est possible de vivre, de travailler et de recevoir des services dans la langue de son choix, et où la Francophonie continue de s'épanouir.

Translation

Welcoming the dignitaries to our province this week concretely shows our government's commitment to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province, where it is possible to live, work and receive services in the

language of choice, and where our Francophonie continues to thrive.

English

Welcoming the dignitaries to our province this week concretely shows our government's commitment to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province where it is possible to live, work and receive services in the language of choice and where our francophonie continues to thrive.

French spoken

Monsieur le Président, je demande à tous les membres de l'Assemblée de se joindre à moi pour souligner cette visite exceptionnelle de son excellence Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Apollinaire Aya et de tous les membres du Groupe des Ambassadrices et Ambassadeurs francophones au Manitoba en ce mois d'avril.

Merci.

Translation

I invite all members of the Legislative Assembly to recognize the exceptional visit to Manitoba of His Excellency the Ambassador Apollinaire Aya and all the members of the Groupe des Ambassadrices et Ambassadeurs francophones during this month of April.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to warmly welcome the francophone ambassadors group here to Winnipeg.

French spoken

Notre province possède un riche héritage francophone qui continue de faire connaître ce que nous sommes aujourd'hui. De notre histoire à nos institutions culturelles, en passant par les 'nombreux' communautés qui vivent et travaillent fièrement en français, cet héritage est quelque chose qu'un nous partageons et célébrons tous.

Votre présence joue un rôle important dans la promotion de la langue – langue française. L'encouragement des échanges culturels et le renforcement de liens au sein d'une autre province est au [inaudible].

Translation

Our province has a rich francophone heritage that continues to shape who we are today. From our

history to our cultural institutions, and the many communities that proudly live and work in French, this heritage is something we all share and celebrate.

Your presence plays an important role in promoting the French language. Encouraging cultural exchanges and strengthening ties within another province is [inaudible].

English

Your efforts help ensure Manitoba remains a place where linguistic duality is respected and where francophone culture continues to thrive for future generations. Whether through education, community leadership or cultural promotion, your work enriches our social fabric and strengthens our collective identity.

On behalf of this House, I extend our sincere gratitude for your commitment and leadership. We are proud to welcome you to Winnipeg and Manitoba and wish you a productive and inspiring visit.

J'aimerais bien 'souhait la bienvenue' [*I would like to wish a warm welcome*]-some names I would like to—or countries that are represented here today, Honourable Speaker. Of course, we have representatives and ambassadors from the Republic of Congo, Maroc [*Morocco*], France, Rwanda, Tunisie [*Tunisia*], Costa Rica, Tchad [*Chad*], Côte d'Ivoire [*Ivory Coast*], Roumaine [*phonetic*] [*Romania*], Thailand and OIF-REPAN.

Thank you, merci, Honourable Speaker.

And welcome to our guests, once again, today.

The Speaker: Just for the information of everyone, we no longer need to implement the leave request. We don't need to revert back because the member did his ministerial statement already.

So now we'll move on to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ste. Anne Students' Questions for Government

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon. By now, it's probably no secret how much I enjoy February, especially as it marks I Love to Read Month.

Connecting with educators and meeting my youngest constituents is always a highlight. During this year's visits to schools in Ste. Anne, I had the opportunity to speak with students about my role as an MLA and the responsibilities that come with it.

Students in grades 3 through 6 were then invited to share the changes they would like to see in our province. Some of the initial suggestions were light-hearted, with students proposing that the honourable Minister of Education consider the following: weekends should be three days instead of two; school days should start later and end earlier; summer, Christmas and spring breaks should be longer.

They also raised thoughtful and practical questions: Could school catchment areas in rural communities be expanded, potentially supported by hiring more bus drivers? Could there be an option for busing to schools within towns, as children may not have safe sidewalks to walk on?

Then came some more serious and thought-provoking concerns: Can the government hire more police officers so my dad has more support and more time at home? Can the government regulate or limit AI, as it's becoming harder to tell what is real? Can there be rules restricting social media use for children under the age of 15? Can the government better protect animals by strengthening hunting regulations and increasing fines for poaching? Can food prices be lowered so everyone has access to healthy options?

Listening to the voices of our children is incredibly important. While many of these issues are already being discussed and, in some cases, acted upon, it is a powerful reminder that concerns we share as adults are also felt by the next generation.

Times Change(d) High & Lonesome Club

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): This year marks a remarkable milestone for one of Union Station's and downtown Winnipeg's most distinctive and enduring music spaces.

The Times Change(d) High & Lonesome Club is celebrating 25 years of bringing people together through live music, grit and storytelling.

This legendary venue recently marked its 25th anniversary with a high-energy, sold-out appearance by four-time Juno winners, The Sheepdogs.

* (13:50)

The club is tucked into the historic Fortune Block, a building that has stood since 1882. It bears the name of Mark Fortune, a Winnipeg businessman who tragically perished in the sinking of the Titanic.

In a poetic twist of history, the club marks its anniversary every year on April 15, the very day the

ship went down. It is a story as distinctive as the setting itself, a space that remains a steadfast anchor in our changing times.

The Times Change(d) presents over 200 events annually, drawing more than 30,000 patrons to downtown to connect generations of music fans. At the helm is owner John Scoles. A born-and-raised Manitoban, husband to Megan Pearson, a proud father to Frances, John was recently named the 2025 western Canada music awards' Kevin Walters Industry Builder.

The prestigious award recognizes his decades of commitment to nurturing the early careers of acclaimed artists such as Begonia, William Prince and The Bros. Landreth, and our own caucus favourite, the MLA for St. James. John joins us today and is accompanied by his wife, Megan Pearson, and his relatives: Ted Scoles, Susan Fahy, Kristie Pearson, Steve Scoles and Patti Scoles.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing the Times Change(d) High & Lonesome Club for 25 years of community. Thank you for reminding us that when we create space for art, we create space for belonging. And here in Manitoba, everyone belongs.

Thank you.

Cowboys Mud Racing

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize an inspiring grass-roots initiative making a real difference in the lives of men across Manitoba, and now expanding across Canada: Cowboys Mud Racing.

Founded by Ryan Ward alongside his mentor, Brian Brown, this group was born out of personal experience. Following a serious brain injury in 2021, Ryan discovered what he calls throttle therapy. Time spent outdoors in the mud, behind the wheel, was not just recreation, but a powerful tool for healing and mental well-being.

Rather than keep his experience to himself, Ryan chose to share it. Together with Brian, they created Cowboys Mud Racing to provide an outlet for men who may otherwise struggle in silence. It's a space where men can connect, talk and support one another without pressure, without stigma and in an environment that feels natural to them.

Honourable Speaker, what makes this initiative so impactful is its authenticity. It meets people where they are. It recognizes that mental health support doesn't always look like a traditional setting. And that, for many, healing can begin with something as simple

as community, shared experience and a sense of belonging.

This work has not gone unnoticed. Cowboys Mud Racing has been featured in media across the province, and it is already expanding, with new chapters forming beyond Manitoba. Yet, its roots remain strong in the St. Pierre area, right in my constituency of La Vérendrye.

To Ryan, Brian, Dan and everyone involved: Thank you. Your leadership is changing lives, strengthening communities and proving that even in the mud, something powerful can grow.

Please join me in recognizing Cowboys Mud Racing in the gallery today.

Henry Guimond

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): I rise today to uplift a truly remarkable talent from the Sagkeeng Anishinaabe Nation, Anishinaabe artist Henry Guimond.

I have often spoken in this Chamber about the incredible gifts that exist within our Indigenous communities. And today, I am in awe of how those gifts are reaching new heights, quite literally reaching for the stars. Henry was commissioned to design the personal mission patch for Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen, for the historic Artemis II mission. This month, as we watched this breathtaking launch on April the 1st, we saw the spirit of Sagkeeng stitched on to a flight suit orbiting Grandmother Moon.

Working alongside Elder Dave Courchene III of the Turtle Lodge, Henry created a heptagonal design representing the Seven Sacred Laws: the buffalo for respect, eagle for love, bear for courage, Sabe for honesty, beaver for wisdom, wolf for humility and turtle for truth. These are not just symbols; they are the Anishinaabeg guiding principles for living in relationship with the Earth and each other.

The patch is laden with profound meaning. It depicts the Fisher, Ojiiig, to remind us that humanity has always looked to the stars for direction. It features a five-pointed North Star, Giidwed-in-anang, representing the five members of the Hansen family, and a thin blue line symbolizing the light and spirit within all living things. By launching the Orion capsule from Turtle Island, Henry has ensured our stories and our ways of understanding the world are represented on a celestial stage.

Honourable Speaker, our ancestors sat under this night sky, passing down star teachings that have

guided us for generations. In 2023, those ancient paths converged with the future of explanation–exploration at Sagkeeng's Turtle Lodge. It was there that Jeremy Hansen went on a vision quest, seeking a deeper connection to the land, and it was through a chance encounter with Henry that a powerful collaboration was born, one that carried our star teachings all the way to the moon. This is a reminder to our youth that our heritage belongs everywhere, here on earth and beyond.

I ask all members to join me in honouring Henry Guimond for this historic contribution to our community and to the world.

Miigwech.

Darcy Malcolm

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding educator and a community leader, Darcy Malcolm of Ebb and Flow First Nation.

Darcy's inspiring journey is one of the purpose and belief of the power of education. After high school graduation, he worked for several years in the construction with his father before finding his calling in 1999 as an educational assistant at Ebb and Flow School.

While working full-time, he pursued his own education at the Brandon University and graduated in 2008 with a teaching degree. He overcame challenges including supporting his son during a serious illness.

Darcy has served as a teacher, guidance counselor, principal, now a director of education for the Ebb and Flow First Nation. Darcy led major school infrastructure projects that created opportunities for students. His champions First Nation culture and language ensures Indigenous students feel seen, valued and proud.

In 2015, Darcy suffered a major heart attack. With the support of the Elder, the culture ceremonies, he began his journey of healing, including traditional medicine and the powwow circle. Darcy is respected as a powwow emcee across Treaty 2 and Treaty 4, using his voice to bring people together through culture and the community.

He believes these traditional practices helped him heal and shaped the person he is today. His life reflects the true spirit of education. He leads with 'humility' and believes that we succeed working together for a team approach.

I also want to acknowledge people in the gallery that are here today. Unfortunately, I ran out of time, but I also want to acknowledge 800 students are watching right now on video of this ceremony that's taking place at the Leg.

Congratulations, Mr. Malcolm.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please.

Before oral questions, as it turns out, there are some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce.

I draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Darcy Malcolm; Elaine Malcolm, Darcy's wife; Lucy Campbell, his mother; Cayla Houle, daughter; April Malcolm, daughter; Myrna Malcolm, sister; Mitchell Malcolm, nephew; Derek McCorrister, Modern Clan Media; and a group of staff and students from Ebb and Flow First Nation School, who are watching live online, and they are guests of the honourable Minister of Agriculture.

* (14:00)

And I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Cowboys Mud Racing: Ryan Ward, Dan Lamboo, Brian Brown, Bill Marsh, Gary Hora—who, as it turns out, is joining us in celebrating his birthday today; Alissa Martens—*[interjection]*—along with Alissa Martens and Nash Guindi, who are guests of the honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth).

And we welcome you all here today as well.

And now, oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act Deferred Maintenance—Concern for Renters

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitoban families, workers and associations are all raising red flags when it comes to this NDP government and their poorly thought-out legislation.

Now yet another association has come forward. The Winnipeg Construction Association is coming forward and wrote a letter on April 8 to the Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu), raising more red flags, and yet no response from this minister.

Unlike the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and his entire NDP government, we on this side of the House are listening to Manitobans affected by their poorly thought-out legislation that will make their living conditions unsafe, fall into disrepair and will negatively affect Manitobans working here at the trades, causing them to lose their jobs. The experts have warned that if this government proceeds with their agenda, and I'll quote Ron Hambley, president of WCA: deferred maintenance becomes the norm, creating unsustainable living conditions for tenants. End quote.

When will the Premier listen to Manitobans and reverse his decision on this poorly thought-out legislation—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I want to make very clear that, on this side of the House, we have a government led by a phenomenal Premier who cares about all Manitobans and cares about all Manitobans having what they need in order to have the best outcomes possible in this province. And we have, on this side of the House, the best Finance Minister in the entire country, sitting right to my right.

And Budget 2026 has a number of measures to make life more affordable to support, specifically, renters, and that is after seven and a half years, two and a half—two terms, back to back, of a PC government who only worked to make life less expensive and more difficult for renters here in Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Transparency in Fee Collection and Use

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier won't even stand up and answer the question.

Renters are coming forward and saying that they—living conditions will become unsafe if they pass Bill 13. And this isn't the only industry coming forward. Other industries have also been vocal in raising their concerns about the NDP job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement and the political slush fund that this NDP government is funding by funnelling your taxpayer dollars to their union bosses.

Let that sink in. This NDP government has put forward an agreement that would take 85 cents of every hour worked by every Manitoban working in this province and put into a slush fund, with no accountability, no transparency and no reporting to Manitobans. That is just wrong.

Will the Premier reverse his decision today and stop the NDP job-killing agreement and commit to a fully—and transparent process so Manitobans know what they're doing with their money?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, everybody in Manitoba knows that we are a government that stands with workers. Everybody in Manitoba knows that. We are the party of workers. We are the party of working people. That's who we are.

Everybody in Manitoba also knows they can't trust a single thing that comes out of the Leader of the Opposition's mouth. The Leader of the Opposition was at the Cabinet table when they were making life more expensive for renters, when they were making life more expensive for everybody across this province and doing nothing, not even doing the basics, to make life more affordable.

So on this side of the House, we're making life more affordable. We're standing with workers. We're making sure that in this province you have a little bit more so you can get a little further ahead. That's the commitment we made to Manitobans after seven and a half years of a failed—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Contract Awarded to US Company Request for Premier to Apologize

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): By the Deputy Premier's own admission, they are not listening to 88 per cent of Manitobans that are affected by this NDP's job-killing agreement; 88 per cent of Manitobans that work in this industry have come forward and said they do not support this.

They are not a listening government, Honourable Speaker. This NDP government also has not secured a major project from this federal government, the only province in all of Canada that has not secured a major project. Manitobans would have hoped that at least this NDP government would have supported local companies. And yet, this NDP government has chosen to funnel \$36 million of your taxpayer dollars to a company based in the United States of America.

Will the Premier do the right thing and admit he was wrong, apologize to Manitobans for betraying them and commit to spending that \$36 million here in Manitoba instead of Philadelphia?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, the only person who owes Manitobans an apology is the Leader of the Opposition. It would serve him well to finally get to doing that. On this side of the House, we're focused solely and squarely on Manitobans and making life better for them across the province.

I want to be clear that the company he's referencing is a Canadian-based company, but I also want to point out that he's jumping around a lot this question period, and I think that's because he knows if anybody pays attention to what he's saying too long enough, you can't trust or believe anything that comes out of his mouth, Honourable Speaker.

On this side of the House, we're going to keep taking steps to strengthen our economy. Our Premier (Mr. Kinew) works very hard on behalf of all Manitobans to build relationships at every level of government to move Manitoba forward. That's something the leader—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Number of Paramedics Hired Concerns Regarding Workforce Levels

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Three questions on growing the economy and not one answer from this NDP government, so let's switch gears here.

Today, the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals corrected the Premier and this NDP government's disastrous health-care record. The Premier and his colleagues encouraged all of us to listen to workers and their unions yesterday, so we encourage the Premier to take his own advice today and listen for once.

These workers on the front lines say things are getting worse. In November, this government said that they had hired 231 net-new paramedics—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—when in reality, it was only 18. That's not math; that's error, that's deception and that's flat-out wrong.

The Premier promised to hire 200 new paramedics in his first term, so why, in his first two and a half years, is there a net loss of 34 paramedics?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, you can tell by the tepid applause on that side of the House, they don't even believe him. His own caucus doesn't believe anything he has to say. You want to talk about health care? Let's talk about health care.

When the PCs were in government, they lost a net loss—net loss of 90 paramedics here in Manitoba. What's our record on this side of the House? A net gain of 41 paramedics in our health-care system, Honourable Speaker. That's ACPs, that's PCPs, we're bringing back EMRs, we're looking at ICPs and we know there's more work to do. Seven and a half years of cuts and chaos, we're getting it done on this side of the House.

The Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: More false information by this NDP government. There's a net loss of 34 paramedics according to Jason Linklater, Honourable Speaker. In December of 2023, when this NDP government was in charge, there was 519 paramedics available to attend emergencies in rural Manitoba. In December of 2025, there was only 485. That is a net loss. The Premier can't deny these facts and he can't call the union a liar.

Jason Linklater, president, says paramedics and Manitobans they serve are tired of the number game being played by this government. End quote. He's right. This is Manitoba's health we're talking about and this NDP government needs to stop playing games. In two and a half years, there's been a net loss of paramedics.

When will the Premier come forward and admit that he has no plan for hiring paramedics and that health care is getting worse under his watch?

* (14:10)

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I am thrilled to be talking about health care again in the Chamber. I really and truly am.

The Leader of the Opposition was around the Cabinet table when they were firing paramedics. They fired over 90 paramedics from rural Manitoba. They wouldn't let advanced-care paramedics even practise, even get a job in rural Manitoba.

Not only have we hired net-new paramedics here in the province in two years, but we, for the first time in Manitoba's history, have advanced-care paramedics working across rural Manitoba, showing up when you need them across rural communities.

We are working directly with municipalities to stand up more ERS services. They closed 23 EMS stations. They cut EMS hours across rural Manitoba. Shame—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Khan: This Deputy Premier loves living in the past. The fact is, they are at the Cabinet table now. They are making decisions now. And health care is worse now than it ever was. *[interjection]* You can hear by their applause that they are endorsing that health care is worse now than it's ever been in the history of this province.

And I don't blame the unions. I don't blame front-line workers. This government has been caught, once again, gaslighting Manitobans on multiple occasions. This government wields misinformation like a weapon and uses it to keep people confused and guessing.

Manitobans don't believe this government and front-line workers don't believe this government. The unions are calling this government out for their misrepresentation of the numbers of net-loss paramedics. And I'll quote: Manitobans are paying the price in longer waits for life-saving paramedic care. End quote.

When will this Premier (Mr. Kinew) stop playing with games with people lives and reveal his plan—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is correct: I am at the Cabinet table now. That is correct.

And I tell you what, I'm proud to sit at a Cabinet table and to sit in an NDP caucus that understands health care and stands with workers. And when I stood with workers this morning at CUPE's AGM, you know what I heard loud and clear? They never, ever want to see a PC government in power again here in Manitoba.

And you know what, Honourable Speaker? They never, ever will see a PC government ever in power here again in Manitoba.

We're fixing health care. We're investing in making it stronger. The members opposite would do themselves a favour and fix the damage in their own house as it stands today.

Manitoba's Regulatory Environment Impact on Economic Growth

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Yesterday, I asked the minister whether he believes that regulatory burden in this province is holding back economic growth. His answer was no, yet the latest report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business states very clearly that excessive regulations are discouraging entrepreneurship, undermining competitiveness and impeding on innovation.

Businesses are saying it. The economists are saying it. Why is this minister the only one that can't see it?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Well, it's unanimous around businesses, the No. 1 threat to our economy is Donald Trump's tariffs, right? The US tariffs, the threats to our Canadian and Manitoban economy, the same tariffs that members opposite were thankful for.

Now, the member opposite should do Manitobans a favour and state clearly, does he support Donald Trump's tariffs, or does he support Manitoba businesses?

On this side of the House, we know we stand with Manitobans, we stand with businesses and we stand with workers, workers who work hard each and every day to grow our economy, businesses—small businesses that employ more Manitobans with good-paying jobs.

And we're so happy that there's 11,000 new jobs right here in Manitoba just this month. That's how we grow an economy that works for everyone and stand up for Manitoba businesses.

The Speaker: The honourable member for La Vérendrye, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we'll dwell on our potential, not dwell on Donald Trump like the minister chooses.

In Estimates yesterday, the minister tried to defend his record by selectively quoting from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business report, but what he didn't mention is that, in the very same report, it gives Manitoba an F on red tape and regulation. That's not my opinion, that's the voice of Manitoba job creators.

So I'll ask again: Why is this minister ignoring the very evidence that he's trying to rely on?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, the fact that the member opposite couldn't just stand in this place and

say that he stands with Manitoba businesses and workers instead of Donald Trump and the Americans tells a lot to Manitobans right now. That's very, very telling.

But, Honourable Speaker, maybe he's too worried about his own constituency to clearly call out Donald Trump and his tariffs, but while he's busy figuring out his position, I'll stay focused on Manitobans. I'll stay focused on workers right here, growing our economy, breaking down barriers, making new agreements with international and national partners, making sure we have the right supports, like our export support program, which we doubled to help new—more businesses reach international markets.

That's how we grow our economy right here in Manitoba, how we make our supply chains more resilient and how we double—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for La Vérendrye, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, that minister's right: I represent my constituents and my constituents are leading the province in economic development. The difference between this side of the House and that side is simple: here, we listen to businesses; and there, they're ignoring them.

We have a solution: A single-desk permitting system, one point of contact, clear timelines and accountability. Other provinces are streamlining approvals and attracting new investment while Manitoba's falling behind.

Why won't this minister implement a single-window system to actually get projects approved and grow our economy?

Mr. Moses: Once again, members opposite continue to be off-base and not understand and listen to businesses. We listen to businesses, not only from south-east Manitoba, but from Pembina Valley, the-Westman, Winnipeg, Interlake, northern Manitoba, to grow one Manitoba economy.

That's going to be powered by the incredible Port of Churchill Plus project, which is going to put more Manitobans to work with energy projects, working in collaboration with First Nations and the federal government. We're going to get that project done, something that members opposite ignored again. Maybe they're too busy trying to kowtow to Donald Trump and his rhetoric to focus on the Port of Churchill. But instead, we're going to focus on growing our economy

right here, growing an economy strong for Manitoba businesses, workers and help to support our entire Canadian economy.

Assault Near Safe Consumption Site Request to Close Facility

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Yesterday, a young Manitoban—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

MLA Bereza: Yesterday, a young Manitoba—a Manitoba who operates a business near the consumption site at 631 Main was assaulted.

Their crime? Asking individuals actively selling drugs to vacate the premises in advance of some people trying to enter their business.

For their community efforts they were punched in the face and left with a one-inch gash that likely needed stitches. The minister's fixation on promoting drug consumption has endangered innocent Manitobans.

Will this minister commit to closing this site until an investigation is concluded?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to extend our sympathies to individual who has been assaulted. Certainly we want to ensure that every Manitoban is safe in community and the steps that we're taking as government are working directly toward that.

This includes, just in Budget 2026, an enhancement to our Downtown Community Safety Partnership funding, our partnership with WPS to ensure that they have the resources that they need to ensure that Manitobans are safe, an expansion of our bail supervision program, more electronic monitoring, more funding for law enforcement, not just in Winnipeg, but across this province.

All told, Honourable Speaker, a \$19 million—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Staff from Sunshine House eventually intervened to blame the victim and say she provoked the dealers. That certainly doesn't sound like the tough on crime, no drug dealing allowed that the minister promised Manitobans.

* (14:20)

There was nothing safe about this consumption site for the local community. A woman was assaulted, and the minister paid people to blame her while she was bleeding from a head wound.

This is happening every day with not only the minister's awareness, with her active support.

The minister can choose between community members providing programming for youth or dealers.

Which is it?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I'm not sure where the member is getting his information. If he has some information he wants to table for the House, I encourage him to table his notes here today and share with the House the particulars of what he's talking about.

What I can say is, is that our government is getting tough on those who are bringing toxic drugs into our communities. As I said, that's a partnership with law enforcement, but, importantly, that's also bringing together all of the voices at one table with our drug task force table that's bringing together the resources, the horsepower, to be able to solve this issue upstream and also support people in community.

It's about getting tough on crime. It's also about getting tough on the causes of crime, and that's why our government is being successful in starting to bend the curve that went up under their watch.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

Mobile Overdose Prevention Site Request to Shut Down Operation

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): This is unacceptable. The minister needs to commit to protecting Manitobans.

It wasn't long ago that a woman was assaulted and robbed while trying to assist with an overdose. Clearly, Sunshine House has failed to operate in a responsible manner and neighbourhood residents have become the collateral damage.

I am calling today for the minister to immediately suspend operation of MOPS. There is a real security plan in place that needs to be prioritized for all Manitobans, not just users of our drug consumption site.

Why won't this minister make these commitments today?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's incredibly frustrating, Honourable Speaker, that Manitobans have to listen to the kind of rhetoric that the member opposite is using today, attacking community partners, attacking those who are serving the most vulnerable in our society, all the while completely ignoring their record when they were in office. Crime went up every single year under members opposite.

And I haven't gotten many questions on public safety lately, and I can tell you why, Honourable Speaker. It's because the homicide rate is the lowest it's been in 20 years in the city of Winnipeg. Crime is coming down under our watch. The crime severity index, it's down 4 per cent; youth crime, down 8 per cent; reported crimes, down 4.5 per cent. We are seeing it in central—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Safe Consumption Sites Community Safety Concerns

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): When this young woman was assaulted in broad daylight, she tried to get help from emergency services, calling five times to no avail. That is downtown Winnipeg under this NDP government. You can be actively bleeding from a head wound and you're on your own.

And I want to be incredibly clear: the work that the emergency services do here and the efforts that they give every single day is greatly appreciated. But it's the rejection of the members opposite, who created this situation, that we want to bring to the forefront.

Can the minister explain, if her safety plans were in place, why was this woman left without support?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You see, this is why Manitobans can't trust the PC Party here in the Legislature. We know that under their watch, crime went up year over year over year, and what was their response? What was their reaction to crime going up?

Well, they cut funding to law enforcement. They froze funding across the province. In fact, in the city of Winnipeg alone, 55 officers were cut under their watch while crime was going up.

Now, we're starting to turn the corner, Honourable Speaker, because we've hired 36 new officers here in the city of Winnipeg, more officers coming in Budget 2026.

We're getting the job done. They failed every single year.

Mr. Balcaen: Winnipeg Police Service call takers are receiving countless calls every day, and that's reality of life under this NDP government. Resources are stretched absolutely thin. We knew this would be the case around a consumption site.

At the community consultation, when asked about the safety plan, the officials from the WPS said, honestly, that, quote, there is no plan, end quote.

Individuals were dealing illegal drugs yesterday at the minister's drug site and assaulted a Manitoban.

So can the minister explain why her funded staff joined the fray to yell at that victim?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, he's just making it up. Call volumes have come down with the WPS because we're starting to see the crime rate come down.

We have cut the crime—the homicide rate in Winnipeg in half, Honourable Speaker, the lowest level in 20 years; and finally, some progress for the rest of downtown. All crime in downtown down by 9.5 per cent; violent crime down by 5 per cent and nonviolent crime down by 4 per cent; knife crime dropped by 14 per cent and it was identified by the WPS that it was our legislation that helped to make the difference.

These are the changes we can make. Members opposite have no leg to stand on.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would caution the member that the language he used is coming dangerously close—when he's suggesting that someone is just making it up, it's dangerously close to suggesting they're lying, so I would caution the member to be more careful with his language in the future.

Mr. Balcaen: It doesn't surprise me that this minister doesn't follow the rules. This is exactly what community advocates said would happen when the minister's other site at 366 Henry street.

Basic economics tells us that the minister is creating a demand and the market will provide a supply; and when push comes to shove, the minister has no plan to provide safety and it's the public that is brutally assaulted if they try to keep their doorways safe of drug dealers.

How many more victims does the minister need to create before she cares about community safety?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, since day one we have been partnering with the WPS and working with them around the safety and security around the safe consumption site, and that's because we come to them in a straightforward, honest way—we come with funding, we come with support—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —and we take their lead in safety and security.

What have members opposite done? They have disrespected law enforcement every step of the way. The member opposite calls them window dressing or makes light of them. In fact, they—in a sad attempt to gain political points—they created a video and shared it of a Winnipeg Police officer who was working with community, that was talking to them about the plan for the supervised consumption site.

They make fun of law enforcement. We support law enforcement, and we're going to do that every single day—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Post-Secondary Education Campus Manitoba Closure

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, for 35 years, Campus Manitoba has played a critical role in connecting students across our province to secondary—post-secondary education. This is especially important for students in rural and northern Manitoba who rely on flexible learning options.

Now, this government has chosen to cut all funding and shut it down entirely. At the same time, we are seeing instability and closures affecting institutions like MITT in Winnipeg.

Can the minister explain to this House how cutting learning resources improves opportunities for Manitoba students?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, I am proud every day to get up in this House and talk about advancements in post-secondary education. I want to thank Campus Manitoba for their years of service and acknowledge the good work that they've done in the past.

As the member well knows—we've had this discussion—many institutions now have their own online resources, and we are committed to and working towards saving all of those valuable assets that exist within Campus Manitoba.

However, I want to point out something that I think the members here sometimes forget. The impact of the federal government's decision to cut international students has cost the Manitoba economy—based on the most recent data that I have—a billion dollars—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

* (14:30)

Mrs. Hiebert: I'll remind the minister that she had two and a half years to prepare for this. Affordability is one of the biggest barriers facing students today. Campus Manitoba's OpenEd program has saved students more than \$6 million, at a time when young Manitobans are already struggling with rising tuitions, cost of living under this NDP government. Yet this government has chosen to eliminate that program with no clear plan to replace it.

How can the minister justify decisions that make education unaffordable and put it further out of reach of our Manitoba students?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite that she sits along folks who were at the Cabinet table when, year over year over year, they cut funding to all of our post-secondary institutions. That is seven and a half years of not enough, frankly, not enough. And on this side of the House we've invested record amounts into post-secondary education. We have great relationships. We're working together with all of our institutions to ensure that Manitoba students have the best possible opportunities.

I invite the member, if she would like to have a discussion about Campus Manitoba, I would invite her to come to my office to have that discussion. But I can assure all Manitobans that the resources around post-secondary education are being directed into the places—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, what's most concerning here is the lack of planning and transparency. Students, faculty and staff were blindsided by the sudden closure of Campus Manitoba, an organization with over three decades of proven success. This is the second time in three months that this government has closed an education institution by revoking funding. Even now, there is no clear answer on what will happen to its resources or how students will navigate the system going forward.

Why does this government continue to make cuts to education without a plan?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I will repeat myself: There is a plan. And the pieces of value will continue on, active discussions happening with our other partners.

And I want to again remind the House here, that it was their government that year over year over year underfunded and cut post-secondary institutions. It was their government who refused to make investments in any assets related to post-secondary. We are funding programs across the province. There are more students studying in post-secondary institutions than ever before.

And, Honourable Speaker, quite frankly, I will take no advice from the members opposite.

Francophone Community in Manitoba Language, Culture and Economic Investments

French spoken

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président, le Manitoba compte sur notre gouvernement devenir une province véritablement bilingue.

Est-ce que le ministre des relations municipales et du Nord pourrait, s'il vous plaît, nous en dire plus au sujet de comment le Manitoba travaille pour assurer que notre province avance avec ce projet d'importance manitobaine, pancanadienne, internationale ?

Translation

Manitoba is counting on our government to help it become a truly bilingual province.

Could the minister for municipal relations and the North please tell us more about how Manitoba is working to ensure that our province moves forward with this project, which is of importance not only to Manitoba but to Canada as a whole and internationally?

French spoken

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): Je voulais commencer la parole pour souhaiter la bienvenue à nos visiteurs de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, en si grand nombre, sans précédent.

Translation

I would like to begin by welcoming our visitors from the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, who are here in such unprecedented numbers.

English

Their visit is without precedence.

French spoken

Le gouvernement continuera de renforcer la communauté francophone en 'investissant'—en investissant dans l'éducation en français et investissant dans les initiatives culturelles et économiques qui permettent les francophones ici au Manitoba de vivre une vie en français.

Translation

The government will continue to strengthen the francophone community by investing in French-language education and in cultural and economic initiatives that enable francophones here in Manitoba to live their lives in French.

English

I can honestly say the effort of our government to elevate the francophone culture and language here is just an example how we bring people in, where people can live their lives—their authentic lives—something that the opposition never did. They shut—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

**Canada-Manitoba Child-Care Agreement
Timeline to Meet Child-Care Space Targets**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, economic growth and affordability is the only way that we're going to try to increase what is happening in this province. But, unfortunately, the NDP continues to fail at that each and every day. We signed an agreement with Canada, the Canada-Manitoba child-care agreement, to the tune of \$1.2 billion.

We'd like to ask this Minister of Education: What is her plan to get to that 23,000 child-care spaces?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): In advance of next week, which is the week of the early childhood educator, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and talk about the incredible progress that our government is making on child care here in Manitoba

Honourable Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it: the Manitoba Child Care Association was here on budget day when they heard Budget '26, the best budget that's ever been written in the history of Manitoba, and what did they say? I will table it for the House in case I don't get through the whole post because it was so lengthy in their praise of our government.

The MCCA is pleased with Budget 2026. It's evident that the government of Manitoba is listening in its commitment to prioritizing early learning and child care: 2.9 per cent increases to wages; 1 per cent increase to operating; 21 new child-care facilities—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: In fact, the truth to the whole story, honourable story—Honourable Speaker—is that the—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —Progressive Conservatives had actually brought forward a plan to—this past March would have opened 14,000—that's 14,000—child-care spaces. The Auditor General says himself that this government is not going to make the 23,000.

Why is that, Honourable Speaker? Because this minister has no plan and she should stand up and apologize to all those Manitobans that desperately want to go to work and increase our economy—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —and affordability measures by getting to work because Manitoba works when child care works, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Schmidt: The member opposite talks about the Office of the Auditor General and their report, and the officer of the Auditor General did say that Manitoba had no plan—had no plan, Honourable Speaker. That report covered the previous failed PC government's time in office.

But Manitobans know. The Manitoba Child Care Association knows, Honourable Speaker. Manitobans know that they have elected a government that understands child care, that values ECEs, and that is making progress.

Just today in the PembinaValleyOnline, what was reported from the ECEs' mouths themselves? I definitely believe that since we've started, we are definitely now respected—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: It's just tough, you know, like, each and every day here in the Manitoba Legislature when the NDP are constantly heckling as they continue to do. Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —there's many school divisions, post-secondary institutions that are still waiting for their child-care centres. To name a few out in my area, Sunrise School Division and, of course, the Whiteshell School Division's waiting to hear when their child-care centre is actually going to be able to go and get the shovels in the ground.

It's unfortunate that this Education Minister has not brought forward any new plans. The 22 child-care centres that she continues to pat herself on the back were all opened because of our government, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I think Manitobans will note that there was no question in there, and it's okay, because while the member from Lac du Bonnet gets up day after day and talks about himself, what we're doing as a government is we get to work every day on behalf of Manitobans.

What did—but, since the member wants to talk about his record, let's talk about it. What were the PCs doing with the valuable tax dollars that were intended to be—to benefit Manitobans and open new child-care spaces? What did they do with that money, Honourable Speaker?

They siphoned \$3 million to their campaign manager, Marni Larkin. That's what—that's his record, Honourable Speaker. Manitobans deserve those child-care spaces—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

Canada-Manitoba Child-Care Agreement Timeline to Meet Child-Care Space Targets

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Well, the Auditor General has determined that the NDP government is going to miss the 23,000 new child-care spaces target by a long shot. Manitoba families were promised timely access, not a decade-long delay.

* (14:40)

Why—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Stop the clock. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

The NDP bench needs to come to order because I can't hear a word that's being said at the moment.

Mrs. Robbins: Why does this minister not have a long-term plan to get child-care spaces built and staffed in—across Manitoba?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Every single Manitoban in this province that wants child care deserves child care, and there is—there's been much accomplished. There is much more to do, Honourable Speaker, we know that for sure.

And I've been to every corner of this province, including to the member's own constituency, the member from Spruce Woods. I've spent much time in Souris trying to get alive the project that she's failed to promote. We've been meeting with the Southwest Horizon School Division. We've been meeting with the executive director of the child-care centre—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: The member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko) has been there. The member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) has been there. We're going to get it done, something that she failed to do.

But, Honourable Speaker, we know the member from Spruce Woods stands with Donald Trump. I would like to ask her today: Does she stand with the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt)? She wants to stand here and talk about kids? She wants to talk—stand here—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Robbins: Honourable Speaker, are repackaged promises the best that this minister can offer Manitoba families? Parents want to be able to get back to work so they can support their families, but they need accessible child-care spaces to do so.

Can the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning explain how she's going to meet her 23,000 space target, or will this simply be another missed NDP target?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, again, all you have to do is look at Budget 2026 to see what our plan is on child care: 2,000 spaces this year alone. Much accomplished, much more to do and certainly much to lose if the PCs ever, ever get back into power.

So I'll ask the member again. We know that the member from Spruce Woods stands with Donald Trump. She wants to stand here and talk about supporting kids and families? Does she stand with the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) who bailed out a child sex offender? Manitobans deserve an answer. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The time for oral questions has expired.

And—*[interjection]*

Order, please. The Speaker is standing.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: We have seated in the public gallery from Pineview Mennonite School 14 grade 8 students under the direction of Philip Brubacher, and this group is located in the constituency—I'm not sure which constituency.

We welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: Petitions?

Grievances?

House Business

Ms. Jodie Byram (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, on House business.

Ms. Byram: Pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert). The title of the

resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize the Struggles Facing Manitoba Families.

The Speaker: So it has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by—*[interjection]*

I would remind honourable members that the Speaker is standing and needs to be heard in silence.

The private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, and the title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize the Struggles Facing Manitoba Families.

The—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Justice will meet Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 8, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Amendment Act; Bill 9, The Street Weapons Control Act; Bill 34, The Interprovincial 'suppenia'—Subpoena Amendment Act; Bill 38, The Public Schools Amendment and Manitoba School Boards Association Amendment Act; Bill 40, The Elections Amendment Act; Bill 42, The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 44, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2026.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 26, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses); Bill 27, The Declaration of Principles for Patient Health Care Act and Amendments to The Health System Governance and Accountability Act; Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios); Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast 'canster'—Cancer Screening Act; Bill 50, the pharmaceutical amendment, regulated health 'professionals' amendment and public health amendment act.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, May 7, at 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 6, The Sign Languages Recognition Act; Bill 36, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 33, The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act; Bill 41, The Promoting Inclusion in Amateur Sport Act; Bill 43, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 16, The Mental Health Amendment Act; Bill 18, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement); Bill 37, The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 11, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences); Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act; bill 19, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Bill 35, The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act; Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act.

Sorry, Bill 29—correction, Honourable Speaker. Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act.

And can you please call for Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: So it has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 8, Bill 9, Bill 34, Bill 38, Bill 40, Bill 42 and Bill 44.

Also been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 26, Bill 27, Bill 28, Bill 32 and Bill 50.

Further, it's been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 6 and Bill 36.

* (14:50)

Further, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, May 7, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 33, Bill 41 and Bill 43.

The Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 16, Bill 18 and Bill 37.

Further, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 11, Bill 19, Bill 29, Bill 35 and Bill 45.

* * *

The Speaker: And now the House will resolve into the Committee of Supply to consider Estimates from Public Service Delivery in the Chamber; Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation in room 254; and Justice in room 255.

The deputy will now take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

ROOM 254

**BUSINESS, MINING, TRADE AND JOB
CREATION**

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation. Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Maybe to ease us into it, I think the minister was in the middle of describing the number that the government is forecasting for the real GDP growth for the coming year in our budget—or their budget.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): So I'll, you know, talk about our real GDP number as the member has asked about.

As I said yesterday when we were having our first block of discussions on this, our real GDP for 2025 is a forecast because it is—won't be complete until 11 months after the year, which would be in November of 2026. And so we are currently at the

forecast of 1.6 per cent, the real GDP growth. And so that is based on an average of seven independent institutions.

What we do is we do a responsible approach to calculating our GDP forecast. So we take an average of those seven independent organizations, in addition to our Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, and come up with that average of 1.6. So that's our approach to doing it.

In addition, I'll have note that the Canadian average is 1.7 per cent, so that's their number they're putting out. So we're right on par with the national average for our GDP growth.

So I'd note to the member that, you know, his—the rhetoric we've been hearing from him frequently around Manitoba being last or behind the pace on GDP growth is just completely off base. It's not backed in the reality of the stats. When we look at the GDP growth forecast and Manitoba being at 1.6, based on our average and Canadian average being 1.7, we're in line with other jurisdictions; we're in line with the average.

We know that there's tough, challenging economic times because of the uncertainty caused by US tariffs and Chinese tariffs, and so I think that's hampering GDP growth numbers across the country.

So, I think, you know, the narrative around us being the last in the country, the worst in the country, is just completely off base; it's actually an unhelpful narrative. It's not based in reality or on—the stats don't back that up. And so I would encourage the member to make sure that he updates his stats, uses more accurate information and, you know, continues to use rhetoric that's in line with what the stats say.

I'd also say that, you know, we talked a little bit yesterday around GDP as a metric, and I think it's very helpful to continue to look at all the other metrics that we use to measure economic success, like participation rate, like unemployment rate, like people, like stats in the labour market and like, you know, even vacancies right now or new building starts, construction opportunities—those are all really positive things that we can use to measure an economy in a more fulsome way.

And I'll just use an analogy because I spent a lot of time over the last few weeks watching the Artemis II mission. You know, the member might have heard me mention it in the Chamber once or twice, and, it's like saying what's the hardest—what's the most difficult challenge with going to space. People say, oh, well,

there's no air up there. Well, yes, that's one challenge, but there's a lot of other things to consider, right? It's like, how are you going to overcome the gravity and the radiation and all the other things? How are you going to get back safely with the heat shield, right? And so there's lots of things to think about.

And so we do a good job of both monitoring GDP growth and those numbers, but in addition to a host of other factors that we want to ensure help portray a healthy economy here in Manitoba.

So I just want to put that into the perspective of the member opposite when we think about how we build a healthy economy, how we work to encourage investment. I also want to put that out there in terms of the numbers and the actual stats we're seeing from Stats Canada, from independent institutions who measure GDP and how we make sure that we are using rhetoric that reflects the actual stats and the most recent and updated numbers that we're actually forecasting for GDP growth here in Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Mr. Narth: As much as I appreciate that the Minister responsible for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation puts on the record that he spent much of his time in the past two weeks following the Artemis II space mission, while many businesses across Manitoba are signalling the alerts of concern around a weakening economy and business growth in our province—as I stated yesterday, more businesses are now closing in Manitoba than opening, and that should be a concerning alarm to not only the minister, his government, but all Manitobans.

So my question will follow, you know, the previous question and those that were asked yesterday, more focusing on the real GDP growth per capita. So I noted yesterday in the final question, prior to the one where we were interrupted with time, that the minister had updated us on the real GDP per capita at approximately \$52,000. The document that he was quoting from—I couldn't help but realize that it signals—that the real GDP per capita has actually decreased since 2022-2023.

Just like the minister to clarify for us that the real GDP per capita for Manitobans has actually decreased, and, as many of us know, many economists do identify as real GDP per capita as a strong indicator of the health of our economy.

Mr. Moses: So, it's very important to first go back to the original, you know, comment that a member made.

Artemis II was an inspiring event, right? I think it inspired people around the world, right? I know my kids are inspired, and I think it's important to acknowledge. We had an incredible Canadian, Jeremy Hansen, on the mission.

Not only that, but we've played a role as Manitobans there. We saw it in the Chamber. Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie) read an incredible member's statement today where he honoured a person who helped to design the patch that our Canadian astronaut wore on the mission. So we play a little role here in humble old Manitoba.

But also, you look it from a standpoint of inspiring people, inspiring young people to reach those new ideas, those new heights, right?

And so I'm excited about the people who are going to say, yes, something cool is happening out there and we want to go into STEM. I want to study more in school so I can be the next Canadian astronaut that goes not only to circle the moon and see the dark—the backside of the moon, but maybe land on it one day. Maybe go even further into space.

So I'm excited for the next people who get inspired by that and create the next tech-set of technologies that evolve out of the fantastic research they're doing to help understand, you know, radiation better in outer space that it can apply to us back home: new propulsion 'meshchanisms' that can help to apply to us here in our Canadian economy; new ways to understand.

An Honourable Member: Relevance?

Mr. Moses: You—it's a part of your question. You said it, so I'm answering your question.

And these are all things that applied back home here in Manitoba, so I'm really inspired by that and I'm looking forward to seeing what's going to happen over the next generation of people who are inspired by Artemis II and, of course, in the future, Artemis III and the subsequent missions that will come from it.

Member also mentioned an important aspect of this as well—is around, you know, quoting people—businesses leaving Manitoba, again, with this glass-half-empty narrative.

But, you know, I'll push back on that and say that, look at the track record over the former government where we saw an outmigration—record numbers of Manitobans leaving the province, right? Manitobans who are here. We've got them in Manitoba, and they

would flee to the tune of 10,000 Manitobans would be leaving the province every year to see greener pastures because of a government that wasn't setting up things right for business, for education, driving people out because of cuts, closures, frozen wages—you know, those sort of things, right?

And so I think there's a strong impact and turning the tide on that, changing course. We saw a complete reversal of that trend where instead Manitobans leaving, we're actually bringing more Manitobans back in. More Manitobans are staying and actually more Canadians are actually coming to Manitoba.

And the significant reason I bring that up and with relation to your question of GDP growth per capita, is that that, largely, is the reasoning why you're seeing the differences there between the 2023 number and 2024 and 2025. Obviously, as you mentioned, GDP per capita is relation to GDP per the number of people in our province. And we—

The Chairperson: Order.

Just a friendly reminder to all the members, all questions and responses need to go through the Chair.

Thank you.

Mr. Moses: Thank you very much, Chair, for the reminder.

Regarding—back to the question, GDP per 'crapita' is very much based on the amount of people in Manitoba.

So we did see a population increase, particularly between 2023 and 2024, which impacted the GDP numbers. Now, what we've seen is, you know, a GDP growth per capita change relative to 2023, 2024, back when, you know, I think people started to see a government that was more welcoming to Manitobans and people started to—stopped leaving and fleeing the country to other parts of the country, started staying in Manitoba and putting down roots.

* (15:20)

Obviously, that had an impact on the GDP per capita. We continue to see a real GDP growth, but the per capita number changed there between 2023-2024.

However, I'm happy to say that between 2024 and 2025, we continue to see growth and, actually, an increased growth there compared to relative other years. So we're actually back on a positive trend of that GDP growth per capita also increasing between 2024 and 2025. So we're happy to say that we're seeing very positive GDP per capita growth numbers.

And we're hoping to continue those—that trend as we move forward.

Mr. Narth: Unlike the minister, I don't like to refer to Manitoba as humble old Manitoba. I think we more appropriately could be considered the proud new Manitoba and we have every opportunity to do so.

But, unfortunately, when we see economic numbers as we do that—as the minister is trying to discount as not concerning for his department, himself or other Manitobans—unfortunately, we may need to accept the fact that we are humble old Manitoba. And I don't want to see that. So that's why me and many other Manitobans, along with our team, see the value in fleshing out these types of questions.

Manitoba currently—and this is statistic driven—ranks 62nd out of 65 when comparing GDP per capita across Canadian provinces and also US states. Only the Maritimes are lower.

I'd like to ask what this minister has to say to the reality that, under his government, the buying power of Manitobans is equal to that of the poorest US state, which is Mississippi, and what this minister plans to do to turn that around.

Mr. Moses: So the member opposite refers to buying power. And I think that's an important point.

So we, you know, think about those conversations as well, and we think about affordability. And I think we've done significant amounts on affordability for Manitobans in the last two and a half years.

First, when we got into office, we fulfilled our campaign commitment to lower the fuel tax, so we took it completely off. That was a campaign commitment, and we fulfilled it early on in our mandate, removing the fuel tax for an entire year. I think that significantly increased Manitobans' buying power by making everything a little more affordable: (a) gas prices, transportation costs went out—down across the board, (a) for people's personal vehicles, but also for the transportation industry, meaning that all goods going to any store that's going there by truck or by vehicle is going to have a little lower costs. And that it had a broad impact in lowering prices across the province.

As a result, for that entire year, Manitoba had the lowest inflation number. We were seeing that coming off of skyrocketing inflation numbers under the former government.

So we had the lowest fuel tax in the country, lowest inflation rate for a year, and as a result, what

happened? Well, we saw, finally, the Bank of Canada, towards the end of that year, lower those interest rates, which meant that, again, our impact of dragging down the national average of inflation helped to then give the confidence for the Bank of Canada to say, look, we're going to now decrease those interest rate numbers, which then made, you know, any homeowners or folks who are relying on those interest rates for their mortgage to help those—make that more affordable.

So I think Manitoba played an outsized role in impacting affordability, not only for Manitobans but effectively for Canadians. We didn't stop there. We did a strong job of improving affordability when it came to freezing hydro rates as well, and continue that with this budget, where we made a significant impact by taking off the PST off of grocery. So we're taking a significant role in terms of buying power for everyday Manitobans.

On the business side, we do that as well, and for workers as well. Obviously, you would have seen our ability to take the PST off of manufacturing equipment, to front-loading a credit to businesses, meaning that they have more capital to invest in their businesses, helping them to expand more, to grow more, to reinvest in hiring more Manitobans. That's our approach to making sure that we have and can keep up with our ability to have that impactful buying power, as the member refers to it, and make sure that we can remain as competitive as possible.

I'll also point out to the member opposite, in terms of Manitobans' ability to have buying power across our province and across our country, is that we have a stat here about our average weekly earnings. Our average weekly earnings year over year has gone up by 3.5 per cent. So that's the average weekly earning. It's gone up by 3.5 per cent year over year. That's way ahead of the CPI number.

So people are earning more here in Manitoba, meaning that we have more buying power and we can actually put our dollars to good use. That's what we talk about when we say we're not only—our economy is not only built on getting Manitobans more jobs, but good jobs.

So we're very proud about the fact that we're working to—with businesses to—collaboratively with the business community to implement activities like that, but also bringing forward initiatives like Manitoba jobs agreement, which ensures that we have more good jobs for Manitobans in sectors like the construction area, and working to ensure that they have

good jobs, safe workplaces and that they can have the right training to train not only the generation of workers today, but the generation of workers for tomorrow.

Mr. Narth: Yes. Unfortunately, we didn't get much of a clear answer there, but par for the course, so we'll keep going with some stats that are also shared within the NDP budget, that states the relation between public-sector employment and private-sector employment and the claim that public-or private-sector employment is still outpacing public sector, which we would expect.

As I mentioned in debate early this morning, the—you know, the majority of the economy is not only held in in the private sector but it's held in in small business, so we need to be we need to be mindful in the government's representation of that.

* (15:30)

We've discussed the meagre growth of the GDP in Manitoba and whether we use the projected external numbers that we've seen published or whether we use the budget's projections. That's a difference between 1.1 per cent, which is speculated, and the 1.6 per cent that the minister has stated. Either-or, when we compare it to the size of government and government spending, we've seen a 5.7 per cent increase in the size of government.

So my question to the minister is whether or not he sees that to be sustainable, and at what point should we expect to see—under his leadership and this government—that GDP growth will meet and hopefully outpace the size of government spending room?

Mr. Moses: So I just want to maybe get clarity also. The member mentioned 5.7 per cent. Is that referring to just government? That was in the—5.7 per cent, you said public growth of government employees? Is that what you're quoting, or is it public-sector employees?

If you—I'll just answer really quick, I won't wait.

Mr. Narth: That's the increase of government spending.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for that clarification.

Okay, so what we look at often is—we look at our private sector and public sector throughout our entire economy. So, not just, you know, what may be listed as core government employees. Obviously, the—our broader public sector include a lot of folks part of health-care agencies or other organizations that are more broadly considered part of the public sector.

And then, separate from that, we look at just the private sector. So, depending on how the number—member might be considering it, might be just core government employees, which might be slightly different. But what we have here is we look at the broad entire Manitoba economy.

So, I just have some few numbers for the member to look at. Comparing both the public and private sectors, for 2023, roughly the private-sector employment growth was roughly triple—sorry, maybe—what would that be—quick math here. That'd be maybe five times, actually, higher than the public-sector growth. The—in 2024 it would be over double; the private sector would be over double the public-sector growth. And in 2025 the private sector would be about five times higher than the public-sector growth. So we're seeing significant increases over—in private-sector growth over public-sector growth.

So, the narrative that the only job growth is being increased is public-sector wages is completely a false narrative. And an example of that is just the job growth in the last month. We said there's just under 11,000 new jobs created, about 10,800. Almost 100 per cent of those jobs were in the private sector; nearly 100 per cent of those jobs were in the private sector. The largest category of jobs is in the construction sector which, as member opposite would know, would be, again, by and large, private-sector jobs.

So, the narrative that only jobs are being created in the public sector is just a—is an inaccurate narrative. And so I think members should really dive into some of those numbers before putting forward that sort of a commentary.

Having all—said all that, I'll also just, you know, stand up for, I think, the really good work that folks in the public sector do. Those jobs are really important. They're really important, particularly the jobs in education that educate the next generation of people who are going to be entering into our labour market, the jobs that are caring for people in our economy, people who aren't able to get full employment or the people who are retired and trying to live out their golden years, or caring for the people who are sick and in our health-care system. Those are really important not only to the fabric of our society and not only to our ability to say, yes, this is who we are as—having a proud public health-care system, something—who we are as Canadians and as Manitobans. I think it's really important to put a shout-out to all those people who do that good work.

And to all the folks who do really important work throughout all of our public sector areas, whether that's people who work in our Department of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation or whether that's the folks who are fighting wildfires when the times get tough or fighting floods or are working really hard to make sure that we stay strong in a variety of areas throughout our government and our society. So, I want to shout-out all those folks too.

And linking it back to private-sector jobs, I've heard from many, many, many business leaders who've said having strong public services is actually a value-add to their business, to their private business, because if they know they can attract employees from other parts of the country and tell them, yes, you're going to have a good education system here in Manitoba, that's really an added bonus. They can say, yes, you're going to have a good health-care system if you come to Manitoba, that's an even better sell. And I think that's really important.

So, I want to make sure that we get on the record that, yes, we're having incredible record numbers, No. 1 in the country when it comes to job growth, by and large mostly driven by private-sector job numbers. But at the same time we're very proud about the public sector that is doing incredible, really hard and really important work for Manitoba.

Mr. Narth: Unfortunately, I wasn't given the opportunity to clarify my question before the minister burned five minutes to explain absolutely nothing. So, honourable Chair, I'd apologize if my question was misrepresented because it had nothing to do with private-sector employment versus public-sector employment.

I highlighted that the minister, within the budget, had highlighted growth in the private sector, which we all can appreciate, knowing the strength of our economy is built on private-sector employment. I never said anything of comparing one to the other.

* (15:40)

What I was comparing is general economic growth in our province, so using the GDP number as economic growth. So I'd like to highlight the growth of our economy in comparison to government spending.

So, my question was if the minister views it as sustainable that we can have 5.3 per cent increase in the growth of government spending in comparison to the 1.1 per cent—or he'll argue 1.6 per cent, whatever number he wants to pick, 2 per cent, 3 per cent—of

GDP growth, which is represented as economic growth.

The basis of my question is: Is it sustainable for Manitoba to see a government spending far outpace the growth of our economy, and how long is that sustainable?

Mr. Moses: So, yes, the number forecast for our GDP is 1.6. That's a responsible forecast that we put forward. I've said it a couple times now, so member can just stick with that number moving forward. It's right on average with, you know, the Canadian average, and we are doing on pace with other provinces. So I just want to clarify that point for the member.

In terms of whether we think it's sustainable to have, you know, increased spending in the government and in terms of our growth, we certainly, in our budget, forecasted in addition to the increased spending on government, is also an increase of revenues of approximately \$1.8 billion.

I think the question is really: What is sustainable? Is it to have—is to have a path towards getting to balance? And what we've shown every year is that we've put forward budgets that have seen us decreasing the deficit every single year, and I think that's what makes our plan sustainable. And it's been backed up by credit rating agencies; Moody's, DBRS have shown—said clearly that they see us on the path to balance. That's what makes our plan sustainable, and that's what I believe is sustainable about our plan.

So, we look at both, you know, obviously the spending, but the revenue side as well. And like I said, when we look at revenue and we look at our forecasts, we look at it very reasonable level, right? We look at an average of independent private-sector institutions that forecast our GDP. We take an average of them; we don't take the highest, we don't take the lowest, right? That's a responsible approach. That's how we come up and help to build the forecast for what our revenue is going to look like.

We saw a revenue forecast projected in this year's budget of bumping up by about \$1.8 billion, which means that, you know, we're on track to continue to gradually work towards getting towards that balanced budget.

Obviously, this year, we see that we've reduced again—once again reduced our overall annual deficit on our budget, and we'll do a really strong job of being able to deliver on that for Manitobans, as we have—as our track record suggests.

And so I think it's really important to understand that sustainability question as one that's not just based on expenses only, but it's based on the full picture of how we plan for our expenditures, our revenues, what our GDP and our growth is going to look like as an economy, as a province, how we make sure we plan for sustaining good services that Manitobans rely on and how we, at the same time, make sure that we have strong economic opportunities for businesses and workers to find success.

So we do that all together, and I think that's what makes our plan sustainable, where we can find and build those really important strategic investments in economic development, where we can invest in the services that we Manitobans count on and rely on, all while delivering on what we have a—what are some of our commitments, like reusing the fuel tax, like freezing the hydro rates and like working towards a balanced budget, which we've shown a track record year over year of actually bringing that deficit number down—by the way, the deficit number that was left in a huge fiscal mess from the last government.

But I won't touch on that much because I—you know, want to make sure we can get to all the questions the member would like to. But just suffice it to say that that's what I look at is sustainable, our plan that encompasses all those factors and builds on something to create a plan that is going to be able to put Manitoba on a more sustainable path.

Mr. Narth: I'm going to start jamming a few questions into a single here so that we're able to get through some more because, you know, what I was leading to with that question is identifying that it's not sustainable. And I think anybody who balances their personal balance sheet for their household income can realize that when you have expenses that outpace your income by nearly three times it's not sustainable; something else needs to make up for that revenue, you know.

And the minister looks over to me as though that's confusing, but it's the facts that are portrayed in the budget that the minister, together with his government, has presented to Manitobans. It's clear as day: the money comes from somewhere else, so that is feasible to carry on day-to-day operations of the government.

I would argue that it isn't sustainable. But I'll update the minister where that money comes from, and it comes from transfer payments and equalization from the federal government. That's something that's grown by over 30 per cent within the last year alone

and something that's grown, or ballooned, I should say, by \$1.8 billion, making up 37 per cent of the Province's revenue.

I think we can all identify that that is what considers us a have-not province and I think clearly explains the difference between economic growth and government spending and how that's feasible. But I would argue that it is not sustainable.

So, we've heard the minister; we've seen it portrayed in the budget. We've heard the Premier (Mr. Kinew) speak to making Manitoba a have province. So I'd like to ask the minister: At what rate do we need to see the economy grow?

So, you know, the GDP growth at 1.6, 1.72, whatever the minister portrays it to be, could he highlight for us, because it's only going to come through business development and job creation that we can increase that economic growth number, so that we can claw our way out of the dependency that we see on transfer payments from the federal government.

So, could the minister please inform this committee as to what rate of economic growth we need to see so that we can eliminate our dependency on federal transfers, because I think the more globally acceptable and recognized indicator for have or have-not provinces is the dependency on transfer payments.

So, if the minister could update this committee on what percentage of growth we need to see to turn our province from a have-not to a have, and at what point does this minister foresee that being a reality?

* (15:50)

Mr. Moses: So, certainly, I want to just clarify a point that a member opposite made that, just to clarify, I believe our transfer agreements are, yes, about one third, roughly, as a percentage for total revenues, which is roughly in line with the former government's as well.

So, I just want to make that point to clarify that this is roughly in line with what has happened in previous years as well. I'll be crystal clear on that point. In regards to our economic plan to grow our GDP to be both a have province, it's—the challenge there is to also indicate what the GDPs are going to be looking like in other provinces as well, right?

So, we are certainly going to be planning on growing our GDP to outpace our neighbouring provinces, but the challenge around giving a sort of concrete number to that is that a concrete number is—can only be effective if it is relative to what is happening in other jurisdictions.

So, I wouldn't be able to provide a concrete number to this discussion today, but certainly would want to be able to tell you that this is our goal. This is our goal as part of our economic development strategy, to grow our GDP, grow our economy in a real and meaningful way.

So we've outlined a number of important strategies, important steps that we're taking as part of that economic development strategy. So, we are certainly looking at—and first and foremost, looking at the Churchill 'progidij' as a significant economic boost for our economy. We've put in, along with the federal government, hundreds of millions of dollars over the past few and committed to that over a multi-year plan to help the Arctic Gateway Group continue to revitalize the port, boost the infrastructure around their railway and the port infrastructure, giving them opportunities to advance their sales and exports. On top of that, we're working hand in hand with the Major Projects Office and the Prime Minister's office and the minister of natural resources of Canada to further advance the project, and working with them.

As we do that, we're building out strong partnerships and relationships with First Nations and Métis to ensure that they have a key and critical role in the success of that project from an economic standpoint, and at the same time, working with northern partners, rural partners at different levels of government. Then most importantly—or I wouldn't say most importantly, but also importantly—we're working with private-sector individuals to ensure that we can make sure that we have the economics of the project and the port—the Churchill Plus project covered so that this can be an economic success. And then, therefore, go to the member's question around growing our GDP at a faster rate than other jurisdictions.

And at the same time, we're—as part of economic development strategy, we've also launched a number of initiatives that help to boost our GDP faster than other provinces, things like removing the PST off of manufacturing equipment to help manufacturers and those exporters put more capital into advancing and growing their business.

We've changed and modified and improved and expanded our SBVCTC program. That's the Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit, which ensures that more innovators and small companies have the tools and resources they need to get that—get those dollars and those seed dollars and to help stimulate their creative idea, getting it from the level they're at right now to the next level, where they can become the next great Manitoba success story.

We've also ensured that we've brought in more capital financing through our Trade Growth Investment Financing Program, TGIF. This is a financing program to help get more capital dollars out to businesses and ensure that they have the resources they need and that capital is not going to be the barrier for businesses to grow in Manitoba.

On top of that, we're bringing together a number of tables around—particularly around the connection between education and people getting into a labour market, to help address the needs of skill gap. We're also working to improve our apprenticeship system, not only through a modernization plan, which we've been rolling out, but also through increased funding. An additional \$7.2 million into the apprenticeship branch so that more skilled people can get their training right here at home.

That means—in fact, I believe it was the largest investment in the apprenticeship system in the last decade. So that means that more people can get trained. Our track record is actually up in 2025 that we had a record number of apprentices go through our training program—a record number. Highest level of apprentices getting training this year. And on top of that, we put \$7.2 million into our apprenticeship system to train even more in the future.

So all these things together help to boost our GDP and, hopefully, outpace our competitors so that we can eventually become a province where we see our economy really thriving in the national scene.

Mr. Narth: You know, these questions come from a place where we and I can identify the significant growth potential of the economy of Manitoba. We see it in so many different sectors that we can be leading our province.

But instead, we see—you know, the—and the minister has highlighted, referring to Manitoba as humble old Manitoba and numbers that are weak but stable. You know, and that's concerning when we see the potential for growth in Manitoba. When we see how significant the dependence on the federal government and transfer payments from other provinces is, and comparing that to a neighbouring province like Saskatchewan, who's really been—their economy growth has been led by only a couple things—that's a government that has a willingness to reduce red tape in the regulatory process and getting out of the way of business growth and development and potash, right?

* (16:00)

So, then, when we hear from the minister, who is responsible for mining, the great potential that we have for mineral development in Manitoba comparable to the potash reserves and extraction development of that resource in Saskatchewan, it leads me to think that, you know, potentially, there's some consideration as to the trade-off between federal dependency and economic growth in our province.

So, I'd like to pose the question, quite blatantly, that, is the minister, when he's considering changes that industry calls on for eliminating or limiting some of the barriers to growth, is the dependency right now on federal support a consideration? Are we drafting budgets and policies around the trade-off that we'd have to give in the short term between economic growth and federal dependency?

Because if we grow—if we slightly grow our economic position in the—in Manitoba, we slightly reduce the amount of transfers that—an equalization payment that is fed to us each and every year by the federal government.

So does the amount of dependency that this Province is receiving from the federal government contribute to decisions that are being made in the drafting of the provincial budget?

Mr. Moses: I want to say a few things clearly.

First, I want to just add on as I—you know, five minutes seems like a long time, but sometimes you don't get enough. I want to also just clearly say, as part of our—my last response on our economic development strategy and plan to really boost our economy higher than our peers across the country, part of that is also to ensure that we build a more inclusive and productive work environment and workforce. So, that's a really important aspect.

We want to really also focus on building up more Manitobans to increase their skills, therefore increase their productivity, get more people trained and into these—the workforce; people who might be on the sidelines of the workforce, get them in. That will help to continue to build our economy and outpace some of our peers—to add and conclude onto my previous response.

As this question the member asked, and just to touch on a couple of points, I think being—I think humility is very important. And so I think I would tell any young person: Stay humble and work hard. I think that's a really important key to getting ahead.

When it comes to potash and other resource development projects, it's important for us. We're actually having incredible success in our resource development and mining projects here in Manitoba. Part of our focus is—as part of our economic—or, sorry—our critical mineral strategy is to really advance many of these projects.

And we have, I think, a record number of projects that are moving ahead over the next 24 months. And so—including a potash project here that is—we're incredibly proud of and is going to be doing great things this year and moving ahead.

And so we're taking advantage of our natural resources, whether that's potash, whether that's nickel, copper, zinc, gold, lithium, and we're moving ahead with many of those. You know, projects are getting online over the next few years. We've got many more that are in advanced stages. And these are all record numbers because of the dedication and commitment of our team to develop them, to work in collaboration with businesses and with local First Nation, Métis communities and do so in a way that not only gets projects up to the starting line, but across the finish line. That's our goal.

And, of course, also let me be clear to the member that we are focused on economic development, not on federal dependency or support. We want to grow our economy. We want to grow it in a strong and good and positive way, a way that enhances Manitobans' ability to participate, find success from our economy with good-paying jobs. And we'll continue to focus on that work as a Manitoba economy.

And, I think, not only all those resource development projects that I've said, but I'll just go back and highlight again that Port of Churchill project, which we think is a really strong economic opportunity for us in Manitoba here. Being the only province in the Prairies that has the access to tidewaters—a huge advantage for us, and we want to take advantage and see if we can live up to that opportunity.

Now, for years, I think the last government really failed to understand the potential of that opportunity with the port project and I think squandered away a lot of time not developing it. So, we're trying to not make that mistake.

We're working collaboratively with First Nations, with Métis partners. We are working with institutions, with the private organizations and private companies. We're also working with different levels of government, and I know that there's a track record of the

former government picking fights with levels of government, whether it was the—picking fights with the mayor—I think we heard some members across the way call it Brian versus Brian—but, you know, picking levels with—other levels of government like the federal government.

Instead of picking fights with the federal government, we're working with them to try to actually benefit our economy here in Manitoba, so, working with them, with their major projects office, to see if we can advance the Port of Churchill project in a real and meaningful way.

So, that's going to help our economy grow. That's going to continue to grow our economy, which is, again, our focus—I'll say that very clearly—to grow our economy to benefit people of Manitoba with more good jobs and more opportunities to find success here in every corner of our province.

So we'll continue to do that work and I think that answers the question that the member's had in his last opportunity.

Mr. Narth: The minister had mentioned projects that will pull us into a favourable economic position out of federal dependency into a position of a have province.

Could the minister list those projects that he spoke of? I know Churchill has been mentioned; there's some costs associated with that project, as well as others. So, the projects that this minister deems as province-building to get us into a position of no longer reliance on the federal government, would he be able to provide that with the committee—for the committee today—a list of those projects, along with the costs that they carry for the government?

Mr. Moses: So, there's a number of projects that I'd love to highlight for the member opposite, and these are just not an inclusive list; there's other—certainly other projects that we've been working on and advancing, but I'll give you a sample of some of the projects that I think are great, and this is a good opportunity to tell Manitobans some of the really good work that we've been doing to grow our economy here.

* (16:10)

So, in the mining space in particular, we've got four new mines that we're advancing and hoping to get off the ground and get into production cycles over the next few months—24 months, roughly two years or so, in that ballpark or so.

Obviously, the Alamos Gold is already under construction and they're hoping within 24, maybe a little longer, to actually become into production. PADCOM, our potash mine, is operating but they have not been commercially operating in terms of that commercial standpoint. So, the potash mine is certainly going to be there as well—started actually under our former government, so happy about that as well.

The 1911 Gold is going to be operating gold and copper. It's going to be operating as well in McEwen gold—it's going to be operating as well. We've got another nine or 10 projects that are in advanced stages in the critical mineral file. And that's on top of the operating mines we have now—HudBay, which continues to reinvest in millions of dollars into exploration and new projects.

Tanco, you know, mine, of course, and Vale Exiro, which, of course, just put and committed to another \$200 million worth of investments into Thompson, and so that's really incredible track record over just a few months, you know, a couple of years in the life cycle of mining for you to get that concentration of incredible developments is actually a record to be really, really proud of, and we're doing it in collaboration with communities, in collaboration with the Environment department and making sure those projects get off the ground in a really good way.

And at the same time, we have a whole host of investments and projects in other areas, like our Cereals Canada project, which is very significant. The Global Agriculture Technology Exchange, Gate, which is a fantastic opportunity to connect and boost our agricultural sector, to get those international buyers to understand how they can best take advantage of our agricultural products, our grain products here in Manitoba and use them for their international goods across the world.

And that Cereals Canada project is really significant, so we've been seriously supporting that. Obviously, we've been working in the aerospace sector. Places like Magellan and StandardAero have certainly seen growth and support from our government, and we continue to work with those organizations to boost our strong aerospace sector.

We've been supporting the VTC, that's the Vehicle Technology Centre, which is working collaboratively with our post-secondary institutions like RRC Polytech to do good work to advance technologies around vehicles, which is a leading sector here where we have actually a number of OEMs that are actually manufacturing right here in Manitoba.

In addition, we're working again in the aerospace sector with some of the West Lands project. That's the Airports Authority to pave the way for next level of support and growth in our aerospace sector, NFI Group, all Canadian built, right?

That's a great project that takes jobs out of the United States and put it right here into Winnipeg and Transcona, employing more Manitobans and building the fleet of electric vehicles for the Canadian market right here, powered by hard-working Manitobans.

And at the same time, I'd love to point out the Duha project, which actually onshored American workers here into Manitoba with the assistance of our government.

So we're working collaboratively to pull in more people working in Manitoba, helping to improve the workforce with more skills, getting them more wages and growing that—their weekly earnings which then helps to boost our overall GDP and get to what I think the member is asking is to our reducing our dependency from the federal government and as a result of growing our economy.

That's our main focus. We do that through all of these projects, none of which is singling out. This is just a list of some of those projects but I think I can't—oh, lost all my time.

Mr. Narth: We'll shift gears a little bit, looking at what the time is. But before we do so, the minister, I didn't have an opportunity to ask him, but the minister had mentioned it a number of times, how the elimination of PST on manufacturing equipment.

So, since this has been introduced in the last budget, would the minister be able to update the committee on the dollar value that has been able to take advantage of the elimination of PST on manufacturing equipment?

Mr. Moses: So, I just was about to say before the time expired that I didn't want to end off that list of projects without saying the Port of Churchill project. So, I'll just leave that there as concluding my last thoughts.

As for this question around the PST off of manufacturing equipment, I thank the member for highlighting. I think that's a really well-received project and announcement. We didn't announce it in the last budget. We announced it as part of our economic development strategy, which was released in September, and we actually brought forward the change as part of the fall 2025's BITSA package, which was passed through

in last fall of 2025, which means that it—the implementation of that—is coming into effect in 2026. So, we don't have the stats yet to show any data on the utilization of that up to this point.

So just wanted to clarify that—how that is—I—we'd be happy once that program is to—has had the time to go through so that we can actually talk more about some of the stats.

And I think probably the Department of Finance would likely have more of the tax numbers to show that. So we could probably—I would probably suggest to the member that in the future opportunities that he follow up with the Department of Finance to find out more about that question.

Mr. Narth: Thank you to the minister for clarifying that because I've now heard for over a year from the minister that it's a big flagship win on tax savings for Manitoba manufacturers, which, in fact, you know, Manitoba manufacturers haven't been able to see the results of that program.

But I'll move on, you know, to something that has been glaring within the budget and also from speaking points of the minister, and that's the Port of Churchill. The budget states the government, in partnership with the federal government, is investing \$272.5 million, to be exact, in Churchill and 262.5 to upgrade the rail line and build a storage facility and another \$10 million to attract investment.

* (16:20)

So, you know, I'd—I think Manitobans, as we saw the most recent survey that just came out—I believe it was yesterday and I'd have to look back for the exact source—but it says, these nation-building projects in partnership with the federal government have about a 50 per cent buy-in from the public. So there's about 50 per cent that view that it's a good idea, about 50 per cent or—and then a portion of the remainder that either think that it's a poor idea or they just—they don't believe that any of these projects will have the result that is being portrayed to them.

I think we all can agree that the Port of Churchill and the expansion of a port in Manitoba has great potential for our province, not only our province, for the entire country, and I think that's why the federal government and people across our country can identify the Port of Churchill as a nation-building project.

But, as we know—and, you know, I'm speaking to the right minister, that, in business development, you need to have suppliers and you need to have customers.

And I think, during our line of questioning in the Chamber and what we've seen in the media, the explanation of that is what has been most lacking by this provincial government.

Mainly, it's been the Premier (Mr. Kinew) who's gone out and spoken about it the most. But it falls under the responsibility of the minister we have here today in committee. So I value the opportunity to ask that question first-hand.

So, I think the first part of my question, since there's both sides, as I've stated, that in any feasible business as what the Port of Churchill will be, you need customers and you also need suppliers to make it feasible. And that's what the port will be, facilitating between the supply of goods and the sale of goods.

So, what is the current sum total of the committed private-sector investment in the Port of Churchill?

Mr. Moses: The Port of Churchill project is really, really important for us, and I think it's great to see that about—approximately 80 per cent of Manitobans are on board. I think that's what that latest report showed: 80 per cent of Manitobans support the project. And it's great to see that support from all corners of Manitoba.

So we're going to advance the Port of Churchill project. We know it's supported by Manitobans—nearly 80 per cent, as the project report said. And we're happy that Canadians from every corner are understanding and learning more about the Port of Churchill and its opportunities that it has to grow our economy in Manitoba.

We'll continue to advance the project because we know it's good for our economy here in Manitoba, western Canadian economy and exporters who want to get their goods to more global markets. And the ability to help our North and our Arctic, right? There's a lot of potential in helping to advance resupply missions and make that more efficient for our northern neighbour in Nunavut, or to help to move critical minerals that are coming out of our Arctic territory to the North and bring those down to maybe western markets or processing in the rest of Canada.

And so I think this helps to build not only a Manitoba economy that's stronger, but a one Canadian economy that's stronger. For example, we know that there's been a credible 'reck'—track record of critical minerals being shipped out of Port of Churchill.

In fact, HudBay signed agreements to ship their zinc concentrate out of there, which they've done over consecutive years, and they're actually planning on

continuing that up and I think actually increasing the amount, perhaps even doubling it, to increase their shipments out of the Port of Churchill.

It's a massive private-sector company, critical minerals here in Manitoba, that are using the Port of Churchill to reach their customers more effectively. We know that it has success, it's had success already and we're building off of that and doing even more.

So what our department has been doing is both helping the Arctic Gateway Group and working with the Major Projects Office to do more of just that. AGG has been working very hard to sign those MOUs with groups delivering potash, so making potash in Manitoba and in Saskatchewan, set up those MOUs to have that product come out of the—export out of the Port of Churchill; working with us, Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments—excuse me—to understand how we can—they can all utilize the port more and 'shep'—and match their products here to international customers.

That's why it was important for us to reach out to European ports like Antwerp and like Rotterdam. And our team, through Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, helped to facilitate those meetings where we were actually in the room working with those ports and collaborating with their customer base and our port here that can link to our supply chain here in Manitoba and our suppliers.

So, we're happy that we were able to announce an MOU signing between the Port of Churchill and the port of Antwerp and the Port of Churchill and the Port of Rotterdam to link up those—their customers with our products. And that's exactly what we see is needed in the industry and exactly what we're doing and delivering on with those MOU signings. So, we are moving that project ahead.

And, on top of that, we're also working to build out our network here in Manitoba, which is why we signed that ports agreement: the linking between the Port of Churchill, the airports authority, CentrePort, the government of Manitoba all link up to show that we have a connected synergy network.

So, if you're a manufacturing and exporting business, whether that's in south—CentrePort, whether that's in southern Manitoba or western Manitoba and you want to export out, there's a pathway for you. You've got partners around the table who want to help make that a reality. And so there's all—I think all the players around the table are eager and looking for synergy on this and we're helping to collaborate that all together.

And so I think that's really important to—signal to send. Of course, as the member would know, the AGG is currently running the port. They're an organization that is 100 per cent Indigenous-owned. They're run by the—a combination of—their board, it's a combination of the 41 Indigenous and bayside communities. It's 'maving'—that includes 29 First Nations.

* (16:30)

And so I think it's really important to signal not only do we support Churchill and Churchill Plus project as we advance it with Indigenous communities, with First Nations and Métis, with the federal government and with the private sector, but we're doing it in a way that brings them all together so we can all see the economic benefit from the project in the Port of Churchill.

Mr. Narth: Just to clarify that response, I'd like to know and the committee would like to know, what is the private sector—because the minister has highlighted that it's a partnership: a government, Indigenous and private-sector model. And the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has gotten up on a number of occasions and stated that.

So, I realize that the project is nowhere near the point of, you know, rubber hitting the road or steel hitting the track, but what is currently the amount of private sector investment that this project has been able to obtain; at least, if not in actual dollars, but in committed funds?

Mr. Moses: So, AGG, who is operating the port, rail side and marine tanker centre, obviously spent a lot of time working to upgrade the port, increase their sales, their business, making new deals. And us as a government play a strong role too, in advancing the Churchill project and the port project.

We do that in many different ways. We help to bring people around the table, do so in a collaborative way, working with Métis, First Nations; for example, establishing the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation as a great tool to facilitate the success of the Port of Churchill Plus project. And I think that's been lauded as an innovative approach to bring people around the table in a good way.

We know that from experience—not only in Manitoba, but in other parts of Canada—that projects often get waylaid or get delayed because they haven't done a lot of that important relationship-building work early on.

So, instead, we're not going to make that mistake in Manitoba; we're going to work collaboratively with communities in the North, First Nations, Métis communities, to build this project in a really, really good way. And so that's exactly what we're doing.

AGG, of course, as I said, operating the port right now. They don't always release, and they don't often, actually, release their private financial investments. As a result of—as a result, it's, you know, private investments; they don't release that information often. But I can certainly tell you, obviously, I gave you a prime example: they are delivering critical minerals out of the port; private-sector company investing their time into shipping out of the port.

And it is not only benefiting the company, but it is also giving the proof case that going through the Port of Churchill makes sense. It's work, it's economical and it is a money-making opportunity. So, we are certainly excited about that and excited that that aspect is going to actually be increasing and continuing for future years.

Now, I'll also add that our government plays a really key role in helping to open the doors for more and a larger customer base, which is why our team went over to Germany and Belgium to help be part of those missions to go and meet with the port of Antwerp and meet with the Port of Rotterdam. That's how we open up new doors as a government: we bring people around the table.

We had such a productive conversation, told the story of Churchill, told the potential that it has to unlocking another level of economic growth in Canada here and understanding the story of how Manitoba—and how Canada—is such a trusted partner; how we are the players in the global atmosphere that want to build strong relationships and work with other trusted players around the world and grow an economy where we can work with each other, trust each other, build trading relationships that we agree on and will maintain.

And I think that's why they were able to then turn those conversations into further follow-up into eventually, in March, signing an MOU, an agreement with the Port of Churchill and the port of—again, Rotterdam is the largest port in all of Europe, right? Signing an agreement with them to say that, yes, we want to share and work collaboratively with you to get your resources, our exporters and resources and goods here in Manitoba and in western Canada out to the customer base in Europe, the customer base that they have

connections through because they all use the largest ports in Rotterdam and Antwerp.

And so having those connections are massive. And that happened because our government was there working with them hand in hand and helping to facilitate those MOUs. And so I was happy to be there at the signing of that agreement with the port of Antwerp at the PDAC conference in Toronto and saw and got a chance to meet the team there from the port and shake their hands and see how happy they were to be getting to understand the Manitoba potential we have in growing our economy here.

So to answer the member's question, like, we don't—the AGG doesn't put forward all those private sector investment finances that they have. But us as a government are very happy to be working collaboratively with Indigenous, First Nation, Métis partners, federal government, private-sector partners to advance the project forward and make sure that it benefits all Manitobans.

Mr. Narth: It's concerning that we can't get any numbers out of the minister in regards to what the investment so far is in the Port of Churchill, because it is a business.

You know, I think every Manitoban that would be paying attention or listening to this realizes that when you go to your community and want to start a business, or you go to the bank to secure the funds to start a business—can't be about just handshakes and storytelling, right? Like, that's the initial groundwork to see if there's a feasible plan there.

But the minister—this minister along with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the current NDP government—is going out, then saying they're far past the point of this being an idea. This is a nation-building project that is going to turn our province from a have-not province to a have.

So we're past the point of discussions and coffee shop talks and shaking hands with those that may potentially be customers, or may potentially be receiving ports in Europe. This project, for how the Premier and the minister are representing it, is far past that point. And it's to the point of actually needing to know what the numbers are, who's investing in it and where the products are going, what the products are.

What are the products? How are they getting there? Who's investing in it? How much money is it taking? Is it going to be our tax dollars? Is it going to be federal tax dollars—which every Manitoban realizes there's only one taxpayer.

So, I think we can agree—is it tax dollars or is it private investment, and how much it is.

We should be to the point of knowing that, and it's concerning that the minister comes back with a five-minute response that doesn't provide any actual data, no numbers whatsoever, other than stories about talking about this project in Europe and the potential of private interest in Manitoba. But we should be far past that.

You know, so maybe I'll ask the minister what the government's total projected cost to do everything that the government wants to do in Churchill. What would that be? If money was no object, you could do it all tomorrow, what's the government's magic number? What is this going—what is it going to cost to make Churchill happen?

* (16:40)

I think there should be some plan numbers there, you don't—if the minister says that private investment doesn't want to give out what those numbers are, we should know what it's going to take to start shipping products out of the Port of Churchill, what those products are, to the point where we project it as a nation-building project, right? Not what it is today, what's going on there today—what the desired outcome is, what is that going to cost?

Mr. Moses: So, yes, our government has—along with the federal government, has spent is—over five years, \$262.5 million on Churchill. That's what it states in our budget. In addition, we're going to have a \$10-million Catalyst Fund to help catalyze this so—over the next year to ensure that we can take advantage of every opportunity.

You know, I don't really understand why the member seems to be so down on the Port of Churchill project. It seems like it's not something that you're really advancing or supporting, right? And it's—the narrative is, you know, very funny. It seems like it's such an economic win, it's a no-brainer that we would want to capitalize on this opportunity. But members opposite seem to have a narrative that they aren't really in favour of it.

And it seems to make sense, right? You look at the track record of the last—their time in government, right, where they didn't do a single thing with the Port of Churchill. In fact, you know, when they needed their help. When the Port of Churchill folks needed the help, the last government wasn't even there to be there to support the Port of Churchill. So it's disappointing to see that.

And now, they seem to be calling them out and saying that they're complaining, that when we're actually trying to support the project, working in a collaborative way with the federal government, the Major Projects Office and the private sector, to really say, hey, should you be doing this or not? Well, yes, I think we should; 80 per cent of Manitobans agree with us; that is the direction we want to hand it—go in.

So I'll continue to do that work and, you know, I'll continue to make sure we're having those face-to-face relationships, shake hands—apparently, member opposite doesn't like that either. So it's important for us to have those personal relationships.

And you know what? Especially after COVID, after the pandemic, it's more important than ever to have those in-person relationship-building activities to make sure that we, as they say, relate before you negotiate. And the deal is, you know, you really want to understand that you're making an investment in people, not just in product.

And so we've spent a lot of time making sure that we're not only bringing forward good projects for Manitoba, but that we're working with good people, trusted partners. And so we're going to work with more trusted partners in Manitoba. And that's why we want to continue to work with people and with groups like the folks in Rotterdam—who are certainly one of the largest ports in Europe—and Antwerp and build on their connections along with our connections here.

Member also was looking for some magic number, if we had a magic number, to wave wand and say, put this together, what would that magic number be. Well, governments don't work on magic; works on hard work. So we actually have to crunch numbers, put things together, work collaboratively. We can't just rely on magic, as the member opposite is hoping we would.

And I hope that, you know, one day in the future, if he ever had the opportunity to be in government, that he doesn't rely on magic to just run his numbers. Certainly hope—and Manitobans would hope—that members opposite wouldn't be relying on some sort of magic trick to run the numbers.

Maybe that's how they did it in the past. Maybe that would explain a lot about how they ran the previous government if they just relied on magic. You know, instead, those are election platforms. Maybe that's the ideas that are coming through their current campaign ideas, where they brought forward an idea that wasn't costed, right, a plan and—financial plan and

idea to supposedly help Manitobans that was completely uncosted.

How were they going to balance the budget on that? Was it magic? I certainly hope not. Manitobans certainly hope not. I think they'd expect more from a major political party than just relying on bringing forward ideas that they're going to put forward to Manitobans and hoping that they'd balance the budget by using magic.

But maybe I'll move away and just conclude my remarks on this comment by saying that, you know, we're taking the Port of Churchill project really seriously. We are working on it as a major priority for us as a way to grow our economy. That is being true to who the people of Manitoba are: people who work really hard, who want to see us advance projects that can—we can grow and—ourselves in a collaborative way.

So we're doing it in that spirit, working with First Nations, part of our Crown-Indigenous corporations—we're working with the Métis as well—working with independent companies who are interested in the—and private companies who are interested in that project, working alongside major players like the federal government through the Major Projects Office.

And so we'll get the project moving ahead. We'll continue to work. And, as the member would be well aware, in the conversations the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) had with the Prime Minister, he set out that ambitious goal of having LNG to the port by 2030. So, we'll work towards that. We'll continue to work to build the port in a good way and make sure it benefits Manitobans.

Mr. Narth: I definitely didn't portray it as magic or that magic would be at play. This is just proper planning projection on what the project would be. You know, I didn't say magic, but I did say if money was no object; and that, I thought, would allow the minister to portray this project in an actual financially feasible model, which clearly there is no financial direction for the project.

We all support the Port of Churchill, like I had originally stated, along with that 80 per cent of Manitobans and 50 per cent of all Canadians, but like I said, it's a business. It involves serious financial planning, which we definitely aren't seeing that clear picture portrayed by the government.

You know, the minister commented on making handshake deals or—not handshake deals; they're not even deals; they're just handshakes and conversations

with people that may be recipients of products at another port in Europe.

And, you know, discounting that—and I'm not discounting that—but I'm not sure why we'd be, you know, claiming to have conversations and portraying that as a win and part of the project development when we saw that this minister was unwilling to sign a memorandum of understanding with our neighbouring provinces to have a pipeline built—you know, a pipeline built in collaboration together to the Port of Churchill, something that we could actually see as a supply of product that could be exported to other countries through that port.

* (16:50)

But since we keep hearing, you know, about something else, a term, a phrase that keeps coming up, I think I'll shift gears because I think this committee, as well as Manitobans, are eager to learn more about the Crown-Indigenous corporation. It's something that the minister has continued to bring up in this committee, as well as the Premier (Mr. Kinew). We've been hearing about it for quite a while now, yet it's not in this budget.

So I'd ask if the minister can provide any information about the Crown-Indigenous corporation that the Premier and this minister claims will be central to the development of Churchill.

We continue to hear about the Crown-Indigenous corporation, but there is nowhere to find the Crown-Indigenous corporation. As far as anyone can see, it's nothing that's been created. There's been no bill that's been passed; it's not outlined in the budget. It's apparently central to the development of the Port of Churchill, central to the development of the economy of our province.

Crown-Indigenous corporation is a term we keep hearing over and over again, but we cannot find it. So, would the minister please be able to explain to this committee what the Crown-Indigenous corporation exactly is, where it exists, who's part of it, and how it'll be central to the development of Churchill?

So, I know that the minister is signalling some departmental staff, so I'll maybe use the rest of my time to make sure that the department, as well as himself, has heard what my question is because there's a few different parts to it.

But basically—or essentially—we'd like to know what the Crown-Indigenous corporation is, where it exists, why it hasn't been brought in by legislation,

when it would be, and if it's central to the development of the Port of Churchill, how it's going to interact with the Port of Churchill and why we have yet to see anything about the Crown-Indigenous corporation.

Mr. Moses: So I'll—going to talk about the Crown-Indigenous corporation, but first I just want to flag that, you know, in the member's previous question, maybe an hour ago, he was asking about sustainability and the sustainability of government spending. But now, in his last question, he's asking—he poses things as money was no object. What sort of line of questioning is the member going from? One minute he's talking about sustainability of financing, and he's saying, oh, if money was no object, right, what are we going to do, right?

I don't think that's any way that, you know, we should be thinking about the public purse, right? We've got a responsibility to manage this with the 'upnoste' care to ensure that Manitobans know that their money's going to be spent wisely, right?

And that's what we do on—through our government. We take detailed care to ensure that we spend the money as wisely as possible, investing in services like fixing our health-care system that was damaged after many, many years; staffing up our health-care system; ensuring that we invest in more good jobs for Manitobans so people have the economy that we want to see for our future, while also ensuring that we deliver on the affordability because we know Manitobans have had a particularly hard challenge right now.

And so we're meeting those three challenges with this strong budget we put forward in 2026, and we are certainly not taking the approach that money is no object. We are certainly advancing them in a fiscally responsible way where we not only see that we have significant milestone achievements in each one of those fronts, but we also presented a budget that offers the lowest deficit number in the entire country. I would—so that's why I would submit it's the best budget in the nation.

And so I think that, you know, that narrative is not the most positive one, and for the members of the committee, through you, the Chair, I would submit that, you know, Manitobans would be well served if members with that sort of rhetoric are not in charge of the public purse in future years.

Now, when it comes to the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation, this is—has been established. It has been established with an interim board. The board is engaged with the—Canada's Major Projects

Office, and they're working on a market sounding study currently. It continues to work collaboratively with First Nations in the—Manitoba.

And we certainly view the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation as a historic project and an approach to setting and securing Churchill Plus as a project that works collaboratively with Indigenous nations that will help us as Manitobans create opportunities that we think will be first of its kind.

The Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation will be a true 50-50 partnership, one that works directly with the private sector and the proponents on this project in Churchill Plus. We'll ensure that this project has a major benefit for First Nations, Métis nations, with the goal of having long-term economic success. That means long-term jobs, revenue sharing and working on things like all-weather roads.

So, as we continue to advance the project in real and meaningful ways by working with collaboration with the MCIC, the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation, we certainly view this as a historic approach that will be able to reap benefits that haven't been seen in other projects of its type.

Now, I think if you look at the example of other jurisdictions, both around in Canada and other around the world, where oftentimes, you know, First Nations are the last people to the table or are only told—advised as an afterthought, and we've seen what lasting impacts those decisions have had—have made. I think we don't want to go down that road because we now know that there's a better path. There's a path to ensure that when we have a project that succeeds in Manitoba, it can benefit all Manitobans.

So, we are taking this approach of working in more of a true partnership mode, a 50-50 split through this Crown-Indigenous corporation. And as we continue to develop the Port of Churchill Plus project, I think we'll see it being as something that really lives up to that spirit of being a nation-building project.

I'll just conclude by saying that it might be worth continuing that conversation with the Minister responsible for Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, who will also have a role to play in the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation.

Mr. Narth: Since we don't have much time, I'll ask my question very quickly so that maybe we can get a very quick response, but would the minister be able to answer why the MCIC isn't outlined anywhere in the budget with a line item, and who are the current interim board members?

Mr. Moses: The Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation is outlined on page 48 of the budget.

The Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

ROOM 255

JUSTICE

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of Justice. Questions will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

An Honourable Member: Can I just jump in with introductions real quick?

The Chairperson: Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I thought we were—the minister had asked to reintroduce his staff, so that's where I thought we were going. But that's okay, we'll get right into it.

As I was saying yesterday, we sort of did a bit of a recap on some of the information that I had supplied the minister in regards to a constituent of mine on an MPI issue. He said he fully read the letter that I handed to him on April 16, and that he was going to be having the department respond by April 25.

So, the minister—you know, I sat here for quite some time prior to—my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Brandon West, allowed me to ask a few questions to the minister. So the minister basically—a couple times when I asked some questions, basically said that I should have been here on time. And some of the answers that I was looking—or asking questions on were covered already.

So, I went back into Hansard, read yesterday's proceedings in Hansard and didn't really see a whole lot of answers—not only to my questions, but also to the critic for Justice, my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Brandon West.

So I would like to ask the minister today—and I'm assuming, because he has more staff here today, that he will have an answer. So in regards to Milner Ridge correctional institution, or facility—the minister's not happy already with this question, but that's okay, I'll ask it anyways.

So, apparently, yesterday he said that there was zero per cent vacancies at Milner Ridge. And then I took that as an answer, and then I asked him how many inmates are presently at Milner Ridge and also how many staff are in Milner Ridge, including correctional officers.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Great. Yes, I am very keen to introduce my incredible staff that I have here. Very happy to be joined once again by our deputy minister, Jeremy Akerstream, who's taken a step away from the table here, just for those who are following around—following along at home. But—and, of course, again, Mahesh Adhikary and Owen Fergusson are with us once again.

However, we now also have Todd Clarke who is our ADM of corrections, so very excited to have his horsepower expertise at the table here. And, likewise, Michael Conner, who is ready to go to answer any questions that come his way. And I'm very excited that my special assistant, Hannah Janzen, is also here at the table, filling in for Will O'Connor, who was here yesterday. And she's doing a great job, and I think it's really awesome that she's able to be a part of the Estimates process like this and help us kind of navigate as we—the questions come fast and furious from the opposition.

So, first want to talk a little bit more about the vacancy rate. And, you know, again, this is maybe where members opposite—I was going to say they're new, as in my critic is new to the—this process maybe, although I don't know, three years in, maybe you can't call him new anymore.

But certainly, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) should have some knowledge of how this has been talked about in the past. As I said, it's a zero per cent vacancy rate is essentially how the vacancy rate across corrections is communicated, and that's because of the staff model that's employed by corrections.

So we use a part-time pool of employees to fill the posts within the centres. This is historically how it's always been done, not just in Manitoba, but actually across the country. This is a pretty standard model that's employed across corrections in Canada. And so what that means is that by definition, in terms of how we count vacancies, it is a zero per cent vacancy rate.

However, folks will remember that last—yesterday—last session, we talked a little bit about the full-time

equivalency, the full-time pilot project, full-time workforce pilot project, which I'm very excited to, again, talk a little bit more about with members, to help them understand how this really changes the game in terms of how employees feel valued and the kind of work that they're able to do.

And I think in a better way, they're able to do their jobs because they're seeing the respect from government; they're understanding that we're moving towards this full-time model. It's making a big difference already, where we're rolling it out, in staff morale and in the workplace performance that we're seeing.

But it's just, I think better for people, and so while we're looking to hire up and increase the number of correctional workers that we have in this province, we look to this model to be one of the areas that we can improve—continue to improve and continue to make strides, and that, I think, will allow us to be more effective as we recruit into this important work.

With regards to inmates' population, custody count for Milner, right now, as of today, this is very current, and folks will know that this fluctuates. Right now in Milner Ridge we have 573 inmates, and happy to again talk about some of the work that our incredible staff do there, talk about some of the programming that we're enhancing at Milner.

Members of the opposition will remember that under the PC government, Heather Stefanson, I think—in fact she was the Justice Minister, and not a lot of Manitobans realize that, but she was actually the Justice Minister for a stint. And while she was there, she oversaw the dismantling of a whole bunch of programming and supports for inmates.

When we're talking about recidivism rates going up—and that can be directly tied to the steps that Heather Stefanson took. By all accounts, I don't think she was very engaged in the role, but the few things that she did accomplish were, like, literally just going after these programs that had seen success in the past and needed to be enhanced, I would argue, not cut.

And so Milner is a part of that conversation now. We're doing some good work there, happy to talk more about it as the afternoon goes on.

* (15:10)

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Appreciate recognition here to continue asking questions on the Justice file.

Following up on my friend from Lac du Bonnet, questions on Milner Ridge, but corrections across Manitoba.

Unfortunately, I did have several calls last night and conversations with correctional officers who were shocked to hear that they were actually at staffing levels, because they're concerned about working short-shifted quite often and they're concerned about their safety, and so, that's why I actually asked this line of questioning yesterday about the staffing.

So, the people that work in that—those facilities, people who work for Manitoba corrections, are concerned about their safety. They feel that their safety is being compromised oftentimes by having short-staffed. And they really have talked about the overcapacity that's happening at all of the correctional institutes across Manitoba. They said that this is their biggest safety concern right now, is the overcapacity combined with the lack of staffing to deal with that.

So, my question to the minister is, could he provide what the—looking for the right word—what the certified or what the number is for each of the institutions and how many over capacity they are? So, what their authorized capacity is versus what they're at, at this time.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, well, you know, far be it for me to question the member opposite's information that he's bringing to committee, but I would just suggest that anybody that works in corrections understands very clearly how corrections has operated in this province for the past 50 years, because they have a very good sense.

An Honourable Member: My son works there.

Mr. Wiebe: Oh, well, there you go. So, okay, these—I won't put that on the record, but I appreciate that clarification.

So, he'll understand how the system, the part-time pool system has, I think, served its time and when it's time to now move on to a more modern and enhanced approach and that's why the full-time pilot project that we have brought in is, I think, encouraging to those folks who work in the system to our corrections officers.

But, you know, I mean if he has personal knowledge about some of the concerns about correctional workers in the system, then he'll certainly have heard about the cuts and the loss to capacity that existed under the previous government and again, I mean this is where he needs to square the circle because now

I'm imagining in 2022, he's thinking about, maybe I should run for the PCs, and he's going, yes, that might be a good idea.

Probably the first call that he makes is, he picks up the phone and calls up his local MLA or his local constituency association and he says, listen, I know you guys are cutting Dauphin. Like, you closed Dauphin, you closed their Dauphin jail and you're—and you closed Agassiz Youth Centre. We lost hundreds of beds in the system because of the decisions of your government, but I also heard that we lost 56 beds at Milner Ridge as well. And maybe he wasn't aware of that, but he should have been, as somebody who worked in the justice arena in the past.

And so, he heard these things. He knows these things. He's got this information and he's going, I want to run for the PCs, but everything I'm seeing is that they're cutting Justice, they're cutting corrections, they're actually cutting—he sees the crime rate going through the roof under the PCs, right? Going up and up and up and up—

An Honourable Member: So much for being nice.

Mr. Wiebe: —every year, and—well, the—you know, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) says I'm not being nice. It's not about being nice; it's about being truthful, and it's about being honest with people.

And, again, he doesn't have to defend how they screwed up before. Like, this is what he's got to get through his head: if you just live your entire life just defending what you did before, you're never going to get anywhere. Because Manitobans know what Heather Stefanson did. They know it. And so, now, if he just defends that all the time, they're never going to ever be able to talk to Manitobans in a real and constructive way. Just my little bit of political advice. And I am going to keep talking, telling the truth, despite what that the member for Lac du Bonnet says.

So I'm—you know, I'm sure if he's talking to real folks in corrections—and I'll just put on the record, we are absolutely an open book when it comes with our relationship with our correctional workers. I have been so blessed to have had a number of meetings, in fact, just within the last couple of months with MGEU around the table, talking one on one, talking about what they're seeing, what their concerns are.

But it goes way deeper than that. It's, like, average—the average correctional worker, right? I want to hear from them. I want to talk to them. I want to hear what they're seeing.

And I said—I put on the record yesterday, I—it's my absolute, like, one of the biggest honours I have is to shake the hands of every correctional worker that comes, gets a job and is working for us and graduates here in the Legislature, although I will say sometimes I'm not able to make it, and then my friend from Kirkfield Park is the one who shakes their hands, or someone else from our team, but it's often the two of us that have that honour, right? Like, it's an incredible honour and these folks, I think, feel a part of the team because of it. And so it's a incredibly—a rewarding part of the job.

Now, the member opposite talked about—I think he was trying to ask about rated capacity, and we can break down each, you know, each individual facility. We asked about—we heard about Milner Ridge, specifically, but I'm happy to talk about each of them. Right now, the adults-rated bed capacity is 1,924; the in-house, the population of inmates that we have in incarceration right now is 2,613.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Just a gentle reminder, again, for all members to put their comments, questions and responses through the Chair, please.

Mr. Balcaen: I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few more questions here. I'm hoping the minister will follow up what he said there, he'd be happy to write them down. So I'd be happy if he would take that route and provide those to me at the end of the day or whenever he can, for each of the facilities; if he would, you know, take an undertaking to get that information to me for each of the facilities, what their complement is and—or, sorry, their rated capacity is and what they're at right now for each facility.

And, with that, I would certainly like to thank the ADM, Mr. Clarke, who is here, and I know that he's a valuable asset to the Justice team just like I thanked the ADMs that were here yesterday. I've had the opportunity to work closely with a lot of the people in Justice and I know that they do phenomenal work, and being prepared today and answering these questions helps immensely. So, thank you to your staff, to the ADMs that are here and their time preparing these answers.

If I can shift gears and let the corrections ADM off here, but keeping with the courts. So we'll move forward a little bit there.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the court system here that we have in Manitoba, and you know I have great respect for the courts, the work that they do and

the work that's being undertaken. My concern is with staffing and making sure that the courts are properly staffed and—so that cases don't fall through the cracks. That's been known to happen.

* (15:20)

And, you know, we've had the Jordan decision that came in quite some time ago from the Supreme Court of Canada talking about timelines for cases to get into the court system, and I think many provinces—Manitoba included—have had cases that had to be stayed or removed in the justice system because of these delays; and a lot of them is because there is not the adequate staffing to monitor the cases that are coming in.

Manitoba is growing, the population base is growing, crime rates are going up; we've seen that across the board. What isn't happening is this government isn't keeping up with whether it be the cop-to-pop ratio or the number of Crown-attorneys-to-case ratio, and that's a concern.

And I've actually heard directly from the Crown attorneys themselves—and, actually, from Legal Aid as well—with issues that are facing them, whether it's financial, whether it's human resources or their staff that helps them out every single day, because we rely on our staff—and happy Administrative Professionals Day yesterday to all of those staff as well—that make sure the systems keep running.

So the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys has been clear that they can only do so much with the resources that are available to them under this government. My question is: How many cases were dismissed last year as a result of not being addressed in a timely manner?

Mr. Wiebe: I do want to start by, again, just talking a little bit about corrections, because the member opposite started there, and I think it is important to ensure that we have all the information out on the table and some of the details that I think the members opposite are looking for.

And, you know, I mean, we'll start by saying that in Budget '26, we've increased the funding towards corrections by \$14 million. And this is an—absolutely the largest increase or the largest amount of funding directly to corrections that we've seen. And that comes directly from, again, conversations with correctional workers, understanding their concerns, ensuring that their safety is paramount and that the safety of our inmates is paramount.

And we're leading the country on—you know, on a respectful full-time workforce model that is going to, again, really show that they are partners in the public safety work that our government's doing. And—you know, and I appreciate the work that MGEU is doing in advocating for their members, and that's why I've said to them—I'm absolutely clear—anytime they want to meet to work through any specific concerns, I'm happy to do that.

You had an opportunity—member opposite had an opportunity to point out the good work of Todd Clarke, our ADM, and I'll just reiterate that, as well, from our perspective. He has been working very closely with MGEU, and with correctional workers in general, and he's been putting in a ton of work to get this right. He sees the value in the increased funding and the increased—or the renewed attention to the important work of correctional workers.

And I can imagine that, for the seven and a half years where correctional workers were seeing the closures of jails and the freezes and cuts to their wages—and then on top of that, like, this labour unrest that Brian Pallister always tried to foment, you know, amongst anybody who came within his orbit. He just—he couldn't stand working people, couldn't stand labour.

And so I can imagine for them, you know, that's been a long, dark road, and so I feel—I hope that they're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We're going to do everything we can to ensure that they feel as though they are partners in this journey of rebuilding our province.

When it comes to courts—again, an area where, you know, we inherited an absolute mess from the previous government. The fact that under the previous government, they had, you know, frozen wages. I think we had some of the lowest wages for our Crown attorneys anywhere in Canada. Like, when we're competing against somewhere like Saskatchewan and losing, that really bugs me, you know, just as a Bombers fan and as a Manitoban.

But it also bothers me because it puts us behind the eight ball when it comes to being able to staff up, when you can't even offer people the kind of wage that they deserve. And so we know that it was important for us to get them—that contract settled, get that additional wage to them, but then also start to untangle. Because under the previous government, like I said, there was, like, this freeze on any kind of additional court services, court resources.

We saw, for instance, court clerks, which, you know, maybe member opposite just sort of skates by or looks past. They're important; they're super important with the functioning of our courts, and we had one of the highest vacancy rates anywhere because the previous government wouldn't respect those workers and wouldn't hire up in those areas.

And then, likewise, with our Crown attorneys, they had these years where there was nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. And then, all of a sudden, oh, the train was coming and they saw the electoral, you know, annihilation they were facing. And they go, oh, we'll pull out this number, and, oh, we need more Crown attorneys, with no idea how to pay for it. You know, like, we keep talking about a \$2-billion debt that—deficit that we were left with because these guys, the previous government, refused to actually cost out how they were going to pay for any of this.

So, right away, we ensured that we had a bit of stability and structure. We started hiring up those additional Crown attorneys. And now, I'm proud to say that we've got a very low vacancy rate amongst our Crown attorneys, and that's really a testament to our government's work to ensure that we are working with them. It was 14 per cent under the previous government; we brought it down to 3.5 per cent.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

* (15:30)

Mr. Balcaen: Appreciate that. Just going to move along on some of these areas, make sure that we cover a large array that Justice covers within Manitoba here.

So, you know, the minister mentioned he can't offer them the wage that they deserve, but, quite frankly, they can. They're the government, and they're the ones that can provide those dollars, and for him to say we can't provide them the wage that they deserve, frankly, is insulting to the Crown attorneys and the staff that are there, and right there, his expression—or with his own words, we can't offer them the wage they deserve.

And so it's disheartening to know that the amount of disrespect that comes from this minister and the government towards our Crown attorneys, but more so the fee structure that they have to—for those that defend people that have found their way into the criminal justice system, the threshold that is there for those that are doing the defence under legal aid, and we've seen a rising number of lawyers and their firms not taking on legal aid cases because this government

underfunds them and doesn't provide them the proper remuneration on the work that they're doing.

And, really, it's quite sad because every individual should be afforded a proper defence within our Charter. And we know that this government has a hard time with the Charter, and we'll talk about that later on with section 33 of the Charter and how they, you know, certainly don't honour what's been in place.

So the minister mentions about the debt; \$478 million was left to this government when the PCs left office, and magically—and this minister and his Cabinet must be magicians because they turned \$478 million into over \$4 billion in debt. So I'd say this minister and his government's doing a pretty darned good job driving this province down further and further: \$2.3 billion a year, millions and millions a day going into debt servicing because this minister sits at the Cabinet table and says, you know what? Let's bring Manitobans further into debt so that, you know, offspring of many of us and their offspring and a generation further will be paying for this debt. It's actually quite, quite sad.

So I'm wondering: Does the minister have plans to increase funding for Legal Aid and to bring them up to the standards of other provinces within Canada?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member, Brandon West.

Mr. Wiebe: I feel—I guess we're into the Estimates for Finance here today—is where the member opposite wants to go, and I can—well, we can play that game all day long because, you know, politicians say one thing, another politician says another thing. I can feel Manitobans' eyes glazing over as we're talking here, oh, we said we left you \$400 million, and you said it was \$2 billion.

That's why you just take it out of the hands of politicians. It's not for us to say these numbers; it's for, like, accountants and accounting firms with international reputations to make the decision, and that's why we made sure that they got a look at the books in Manitoba, and they couldn't believe it, right, that a government could be so dishonest with people and—you know, and then try and paint this as, oh, well, we left you so much money and—no, I mean, we're not making this up; this is the accounting firms that are saying this.

And—you know, and, again, like, member opposite wants to—he wants to talk about where our current position when it comes to debt servicing. We're actually increasing—or lowering the amount of debt servicing, increasing our ratio of money that's going

to be able to be spent on health care, affordability, justice, because we're actually doing that hard work.

And it's not easy work, but we're seeing the benefits. And so, you know, he's going to jump up and down for Saskatchewan all day long, I guess. But, you know, Saskatchewan's doing way worse than us. They've got a terrible deficit number, whereas our deficit number has been on track.

Of course, we saw wildfires last year that were unprecedented, and Manitobans understand that—that's a one-time cost. But in terms of our structural targets, we're seeing that there's really a huge improvement.

Now, in terms of the—what we're talking about with the courts. And I'm not sure if it was—if the member opposite didn't hear me properly or maybe I misspoke. So I'll just be very, very clear: Under the previous government, there was a disrespect for Crown attorneys that was, you know, I would say unprecedented. I spent a ton of time with the Crown attorneys when I was in opposition because they would come to the Legislature and they would try and get time with the minister at that time, and they wouldn't even meet with them. They wouldn't even meet with the Crown attorneys. They wouldn't even hear them out. And the grievance that we inherited from the previous government, I think speaks to that kind of attitude and that kind of disrespect.

So if I—you know, if the member opposite didn't understand what I was saying, it was saying that under their government, there was a level of disrespect for Crown attorneys that, again, left us with a hole that we continue to dig out of. And we are doing that work. And I'm happy to meet with the Crown attorneys at any time that they want. We want to ensure that the resources that they have are adequate and that they're improving—that we're keeping—we're lowering the amount of time that it's taking for them to—or the number of cases that they—caseload that they have and the cases that they're processing.

When it comes to, you know, what we're talking about here, he mentioned the timelines, the number of cases that were dismissed here in the province of Manitoba after Jordan was implemented here in the country.

Well, you know, we saw under their watch in 2022, when things were getting worse and worse every year, there were 10 cases that were dismissed; 2025, the latest number that we have, there were three cases here in Manitoba. And contrast that with 10,000 cases across Canada that subsequently have been dismissed.

We're also happy to say that the number is coming down in terms of the time to deposition that's under their watch, the end of their time in government. It was 208 days; we've come down by 11 and a half per cent, down to 184 days. And so we're making progress. We're starting to see some of the investments that we're making pay off.

But I want to ensure, you know, members opposite—but more importantly, Manitobans—that this is simply a reflection of the administration of justice in so much as it affects them and it impacts them. And so I really want to centre victims in this conversation. And what we're really focused on is ensuring that victims get the supports and get timely access to justice that they deserve.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Balcaen: Appreciate the opportunity for another question here. Going to flip over a little bit to a different area and look under Manitoba Public Insurance as another reporting agency that's listed in the supplemental Estimates book. I'd like to go a little bit further on that and have some time to ask some questions on that, as the minister is also responsible for MPI.

And so, the minister lists MPI as another reporting agency in his supplemental Estimates book. And the information provided in the file and corresponding links are a little bit confusing.

So can the minister clarify—

The Chairperson: Order, please.

* (15:40)

Just for clarity, we are here to discuss Supplements to the Estimates of Expenditure for Justice. So, there's no line item that refers to MPI, although the Minister of Justice is also responsible for MPI, but questions related to MPI could be asked during a platform where MPI issues would be discussed.

Mr. Balcaen: Point of order, if I could, to ask about this. *[interjection]* I'm sorry?

The Chairperson: Okay, once again, the questions on MPI on this platform, which is Estimates for Justice, are out of order.

Mr. Balcaen: My apologies for that. I assumed I could ask questions here.

So the minister cites The Protective Detention and Care of Intoxicated Persons Act as a key tool for battling repeat offenders, but according to the Premier (Mr. Kinew), the act has not been used to date and no

offender has been held for over 21 hours. And this opened in November. It was late March before the site accepted a single non-alcohol case, and why did this government drag their feet so long on this centre?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I actually appreciate that the member opposite is characterizing the important role that the protective-care centres will play and the enhanced intoxicated persons act legislation that we brought forward, how it actually works in the real world, in practice, because what—we tried to be very clear with the opposition and Manitobans that by no means is it our intention to keep people longer than is necessary when they are intoxicated.

And for folks that know the former Intoxicated Persons Detention Act very well—I think members who have represented clients who have intimate knowledge of that facility in the past, they know that while 24 hours was the longest that somebody could be held, that wouldn't have been the average or the standard by any means. It's not like somebody came in and they were held, no matter what, for 24 hours.

And, likewise, when we're talking about the—this enhanced detention capability, we're not talking about holding somebody for 72 hours. We're holding them while they get sober and while they are in custody and not becoming a danger to themselves and not becoming a danger to anyone else.

You know, I think it's important to really note what this is all about, and that's about protecting Manitobans. It's about making people safer, keeping communities safe, of course; I think we all understand that. We've all seen somebody who's on a street corner or in—you know, in a vulnerable place, who is under the influence of drugs in a very serious way.

And, you know, probably for most people, that means that they felt scared or they felt anxious or they were concerned for that person's well-being. So, it is definitely about the public safety aspect, but I think what it's mostly about is getting people help. It's about ensuring that the resources that folks need to get on a better path are provided.

And that's why, you know, as we worked to stand up the protective care centre in—at 190 Disraeli, in a facility I've had a chance to visit and see; it's state of the art. If anybody knows the old, you know, drunk tank—that's what it was called, that's what people knew it—if anybody had seen or been through—and I had been through there as well—if anybody had been through there, they know that it was very old, it was

very antiquated, I think, by modern standards. And, certainly, it didn't offer the kind of health care and the kind of supports that people need when they're in these kinds of situations.

We—it was important for us to create a facility that offered those wrap-around services, and what we see today, actually, in that facility is—really, it's just the beginning. It's just the first step in offering a whole set—a whole suite of wrap-around services that are going to really be able to offer true support to those Manitobans who are suffering from addiction.

So I'll just say the member opposite is incorrect about the application of this new legislation. He is correct in saying that nobody has been held for the full 72 hours. Again, that's not what this is about. It's not about locking people up. It's not about, you know, being punitive in taking them off the streets. It's about helping them protect themselves and the community and giving them help and giving them support.

And, you know, it's unfortunate because the members opposite—like, again, you know, Leader of the Opposition goes out and he says I can't—you know, this was last year in Estimates—and he said, I think this is important to get this right. It's important to talk about supervised consumption in a responsible way.

And then we hear, like, the kind of questions we heard today in the House from members opposite, where they're just, like, being inflammatory about some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, the kinds of people who are suffering from addictions. Like, it was unbelievable that they would go after that—after people in that way. Look, we want to get them help and this is just one way that we can do that.

So, from December 2 to present, there have been 2,834 intakes at the centre linked to alcohol. From March 4 to present, there have been 11 that have been linked to substances other than alcohol. We're going to get people help. We're not going to hold them unnecessarily. We're just going to help them, give them the safe—the resources that they need to get on the right path.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Balcaen: At this point, I'd like to cede the floor to the member for Fort Garry for up to one hour.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member, Brandon West.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): So the minister began his comments this afternoon saying that he

wasn't being mean, he's just being honest. So we're going to test that proposition this afternoon.

On November 12, 2024—and the minister may want to listen to this—I requested from the ministry the annual cost to maintaining the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) security detail, including the SUV. On December 18, 2024, the department refused access to those records. In the refusal, the ministry basically gaslighted Manitobans, claimed that we were requesting the individual names of the officers stationed at the Legislature and, somehow, by revealing the financial costs of the limousine and chauffeur, that that would endanger lives.

* (15:50)

Well, that was patent nonsense. We filed the complaint on December 20, '24, and an investigation was launched. And it appears that the ministry did not co-operate with the Ombudsman's office. In fact, it began to stonewall the Ombudsman's office and took eight months to respond to the Ombudsman, responding on August 6, 2025.

That's almost a full year after the initial complaint, we got a response back. And the Justice Ministry said at that time—if you can believe this—the records didn't exist. Well, we didn't believe that. This is the Premier's office, spending multi-million dollars of taxpayer dollars every year for a limousine and a chauffeur; of course there are records. The Ombudsman *[phonetic]* didn't believe that either and got further involved. On November 7, 2025, basically, they said that the ministry was capable of getting that information, and the ministry came back and said that they refused to, based on security concerns.

So a report gets issued by the Ombudsman's *[phonetic]* office. It's released on January 16, 2026, and I'm going to refer you to page 9 of that report, and I quote: Based on the final explanation provided by Justice, it's clear to our office that a thorough search for records was not conducted prior to making both the original and the revised access decision.

They went on to order the minister to disclose that information, and is now April 23, 2026—we're talking about almost 18 months after—and the minister still refuses to provide that information, which they are legally bound to do so by law.

Why does the minister continue to violate Manitoba law? Why is he ignoring the order from the Ombudsman *[phonetic]* to release that information? And, quite frankly, what is he afraid of? Why can't

Manitobans see how much they're paying for this car and driver?

* (16:00)

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member, for your question.

Mr. Wiebe: Lots of discussion here at our table; we are struggling to find the line that the member opposite is referring to in the budget documents that are under debate here—discussion here at the table today.

So, maybe I could just ask him if he can point to the line that he's referring to; that would maybe help us focus up our search a little bit more and get him the information as best we can.

Mr. Wasyliw: So I guess the minister's commitment to honesty has dissipated rather quickly here this afternoon. That took 16 minutes; 16 minutes—

The Chairperson: Order, please. Order, please.

Just a caution to—members cannot refer to honesty, dishonesty of the members in this committee, so I ask the member to please withdraw that part of the comment.

Mr. Wasyliw: I was certainly—I will withdraw that comment, but I was certainly quoting the minister, and I was referring back to the minister's own comments that he made this afternoon. But that being said—okay, I withdraw that.

The Chairperson: Member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliw: Thank you; I withdraw that unequivocally.

So the minister just wasted 16 minutes of this committee's time to come back with a question which he knows the answer to.

And it's clear what's going on here, because it's been clear over 18 months that this minister has absolutely no intention of complying with the Ombudsman's *[phonetic]* report, has no intention of complying with Manitoba law and does not believe that Manitobans have the right to know how many millions a year they are spending on the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) car and driver service.

* (16:10)

We are the child poverty capital of Canada. We are running billion-dollar deficits here. We cannot afford extravagances for the Premier (Mr. Kinew). It is a simple, legitimate question that Manitobans want to know, and it is absolutely telling that this minister

is stonewalling here today, not taking this situation seriously and is refusing to answer something which is at the tip of his staff's fingers that they can provide that information today, now, immediately.

So I don't think it'll be very productive for the minister to waste even more of the committee's time on this issue, so I will move on.

On May 28, 2025, I requested records for the ankle bracelet program, including how many people were on the program and how many had tampered or breached while being on the program.

On July 11, 2023, the minister's office wrote back and claimed that that information didn't exist. Of course, that was not true, and we know it wasn't true because CBC, on October 27, 2027, released a story with the very data I was seeking. And, in fact, the story says they got it from the minister's office. Interesting.

The Crown attorneys were cited in that article that they were releasing these numbers at bail hearings and, basically, the CBC shamed the minister into releasing the numbers. And they make it clear in the CBC article that it was only after the Crown attorneys had put those numbers on the record that the administrator had admitted he had them and then gave them over to CBC.

But for the Crown attorneys basically putting that information on the public record, the minister would have kept denying that that information was out there. That is shocking misconduct. It is a dereliction of duties, and this minister really needs to speak to this.

There have been an intentional and flagrant breach of Manitoba law by this ministry, and it appears that the Justice Department doesn't feel bound by Manitoba law. And there seems to be a culture of lawlessness in this department where they will not release the minister's information when he's required to do so and they will not release what the Premier's car and driver cost Manitobans.

So I will give this minister an opportunity to come clean, to explain why his department actually lied on a FIPPA request and gave a 'fraudulent' response to a FIPPA request.

So, I'll give the minister time to apologize and to explain, because Manitobans deserve an explanation. Why did the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) department fraudulently put out a FIPPA response?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member, for your question.

* (16:20)

Mr. Wiebe: I mean, I'm really disappointed in the member opposite. I've been disappointed in him many times in his professional conducts as a legislator, but he might have just found a new low; because coming after me, you know, that's the name of the game, right?

We're elected officials, and, you know, I guess it's by its nature, this place can be adversarial. And I guess what happened is is that he wants to make wild accusations about my integrity, but he knows that he's bound by the rules. He can't call me a liar, so then he just turns his attention to the staff, which is so out of line and is so over the line that I can't believe that he would do that here in this place.

Like, the people that we work with are some of the smartest, some of the most hard-working and some of the most honest people I've ever met in my life. And that is not just in my department, but every civil servant that I have met. Like, for somebody to come in here and start to accuse them of not being truthful with Manitobans, not only does it—is it personally offensive to the work that these folks have put in, in their careers, to become experts at what they do, in giving us advice, as politicians, but it's also undermines democracy. It undermines everything that we do here.

* (16:30)

And, like, that's the kind of stuff that's happening down south right now. That's the kind of attitude that Donald Trump has, that he's emulating here, like, tear down the—you know, he didn't get the—he thought there was an answer. I'm—we're still looking. We're still looking for this line that he's talking about in our Estimates book that he won't give us for whatever reason.

But he doesn't go after that; he doesn't talk about that. He goes after the integrity of the system, of the people that are doing this work. And that is beyond the pale. That is unacceptable as a legislator. I think he deserves—he—I think he owes everybody an apology. These folks deserve that apology.

I'll say it over and over again: These are some of the smartest folks that I've ever met in my life. I trust the advice that they give, and we have to trust the advice that they give because we're not experts. I'm not an expert. And despite what that member opposite

might think, he's not an expert, either. We have a team of experts. We have a team of departmental staff who have devoted their life to making Manitoba a better place.

And for him to suggest that they are not telling the truth is—well, again, he conducts himself this way, I guess, in the courtroom every day. I've certainly seen it on a personal level, the way he's conducted himself as part of a caucus and part of a team. But now he's willing to expand that out to hard-working civil servants, and I won't stand for that. So I'm frustrated by that.

What I will say is he understands very clearly the rules of FIPPA. Like, he's pretending that he doesn't understand—he hasn't read our FIPPA legislation. Or maybe he hasn't, I don't know; I'm not going to speak for him.

But if he would've spent any time reading the legislation, he'd understand that there are very specific provisions when it comes to safety and security and especially when it comes to how we communicate, in our case, with law enforcement and the information that's shared with law enforcement. You know, that's the answer that the Ombudsman gave him; that's the answer that our department will continue to give him.

You know, if he wants to go back and he wants to, he can certainly write a FIPPA request to the RCMP. If he really thinks that he wants to expose their information on their operations, go ahead, try. Try and get that information from the RCMP. I'm sure they'll tell him the exact same thing I'm telling him, and that's not for public consumption because we want to keep people safe.

The further question around, you know, the importance of adhering to our FIPPA legislation, when we say we don't have something, we don't have it. When we direct our staff to spend hundreds of hours to create something because it's a priority of our government, that's a different story.

But FIPPA's around to get records and documents. And, again, the member opposite should know that this legislation is something that we're going to follow to a T. We're always going to do that as our team here in the Legislature. And, again, he can come after me all he wants, but just leave the staff out of it. Let's do this on the up and up, and I'll be happy to keep answering his questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Wasyliv: Unfortunately, the minister's behaviour this afternoon has been absolutely shameful. That response—he took 15 minutes, burned, wasted time to come up with that shameful response.

And, of course, he's deflecting because he knows the facts. And the facts are that the request for very specific information about ankle bracelets was made to his office. His office—again, a fact—came back and fraudulently stated they didn't have that information. And then—again, fact—when the Crown attorneys leaked that information in open court, he then felt shamed to release it to CBC, and that's how it came under the public record.

Not only is that a clear violation of Manitoba law—they had a legal duty to provide that information—it was fraud. And instead of saying, hey, I'm the Minister of Justice, I have to make sure laws are enforced in Manitoba, and we can't be seen to be hiding information from Manitobans, I need to investigate what happened and make sure it never goes on again, this minister comes in here and self-righteously says that, oh, he's the defender of his staff and they're the greatest staff in the world and they've never done anything wrong.

Well, they did wrong. They broke the law. They broke the law, and this minister should care. And it is shocking that he doesn't and that, instead of actually addressing this issue, he's attempting, with bluster and bloviation, to try to make it go away. Well that's not on.

Manitobans deserve better; this committee deserves better, and the absolute shameful behaviour of this minister is showing contempt to both this committee and to Manitobans, and I hope he governs himself accordingly and in his next response will explain why his ministry lied on a FIPPA and gave a fraudulent FIPPA to an MLA. Because there is no contesting of the facts. That happened. That's all on the public record. He can't run from that. He can't escape from that.

Now, this minister is on record stating that the ankle monitor program, and I quote, is used to prevent repeat offending and ensure people will follow their conditions while on release. And, of course, according to the numbers from this minister to CBC on October 16, 2025, 530 people were released on monitors, 243 of them rearrested, 53 removed their devices, 16 damaged them, 12 let their battery die.

At that point, CBC put out a headline of a 60 per cent failure rate. Problem is, that's not actually the failure rate. The criminologists that looked into it and said

they included in that number people who were still on the program, people who could breach and who could damage their equipment. So, if you take them out of the sample and only look at people who finished the program and their success or failure rate, the failure rate is 89 per cent.

This is the key bail reform program of this government, and it has an 89 per cent failure rate, and of course, the Crown Attorney's office, on the record, described the program as a staggering failure. Front-line Justice workers say this program is a staggering failure, and so I'm wondering why the minister in this budget doubled down on this staggering failure of a program and put more money into it. Perhaps he can explain to Manitobans why he did that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member, for your question.

* (16:40)

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, on a point of order.

* (16:50)

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Member for Brandon West, on a point of order.

Mr. Balcaen: Just wondering. The minister is getting information from his staff to answer this question.

I ceded the floor to the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) up until 4:49, I believe the time would've come to. Just wondering if the minister would undertake to provide a answer in writing to the member from Fort Garry so I can retake the floor and start with questions again.

Mr. Wiebe: To the same point of order, honourable Chair, I want to ensure—

The Chairperson: Sorry. Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: And, yes, to the same point of order. I do, you know, for the benefit of Manitobans, I want to ensure that I get the right information, that it's accurate and that it is put on the record, the official record of this committee.

So I don't believe that the member opposite has a point of order, but I do want to ensure that I get the answer to the member here in the committee. And, you know, I think we're very close to being able to get everything that I need to be able to answer that question, and so I'd be happy to answer it as soon as possible.

The Chairperson: Order, please.

This is not a point of order and the minister has a right to respond to the question, and there is no time limit on the minister to discuss or consult with his department.

* * *

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, honourable Chair, and I just want to start by saying that how incredibly disappointed, once again, I am in the member opposite. I've seen this, his personal character, before, and for him to then bring that up in the committee and not just—you know, not just once or accidentally, but now he's, like, doubling down on it and, in fact, I think using more extreme language than I've heard anywhere else. He's not just accusing people of lying, but he's actually saying that people are breaking the law and he—then he says it again.

So I encourage him to go out in the hallway and say that and make those accusations because it's completely ludicrous that he would do that. He's unhinged and, I mean, he's been unhinged, you know, ever since he was booted from caucus where he was given multiple chances to understand what being part of a team, a government that is making a real difference for Manitobans, looks like and he couldn't be a part of that team. He made that decision and now, of course, he's becoming more unhinged every day because he realizes that his time in this Legislature is coming to a close. People in Manitoba are going to be very clear with him.

And it's bewildering to me that he continues to argue against electronic monitoring, and I guess he's doing this because he's making the arguments—same argument he would make in a courtroom for one of his clients, and maybe there's a specific client that he has in mind that he's arguing for right now here in the committee. And he can put that on the record if he wants, which one of his clients is currently out on electronic monitoring.

But Manitobans overwhelmingly support electronic monitoring, and they do so because they understand that it's an effective program. He—you know, they made the decision in the last election. We talked a lot about electronic monitoring and Manitobans supported our platform on getting tough on crime.

But it's not just Manitoba. It's not just the average Manitobans; it's law enforcement; it's people like Brandon police chief Tyler Bates, a man I have a ton of respect for. He says this is a direct response to what communities have been asking for. The program is a

public safety measure that helps us do our job more effectively.

It's not just law enforcement; it's community too. It's community supports like Tsungai Muvingi from the Manitoba association of shelter workers, a person that the member opposite knows well. She said the introduction of the electronic monitoring program marks a significant step in addressing the escalation of the levels of violence that we are seeing in Manitoba.

The RCMP, Crown attorneys, we've got—I mean, go down the list—National Police Federation—go down the list—go down the list. Members opposite can say what he wants about my staff, but I'm telling him that he needs to understand that this is an effective program that was cut under the previous government. We saw the effects of that. We saw the crime rate go up every single year, and again, that's good for business, I guess, for the member opposite. But he needs to account to Manitobans why—

The Chairperson: Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

CHAMBER

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Public Service Delivery.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

Could the minister please introduce the staff that are in attendance.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I have with me Deputy Minister Brenda DeSerrano; director of Ministerial Affairs, Julia Antonyshyn; assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer, Jason Perez; assistant deputy minister of Asset Management Division, Brent Timmerman; acting assistant deputy minister of Procurement and Supply Chain Division, Kunnal Sharma; assistant deputy minister of Consumer Protection Division, Kathryn Durkin-Chudd; acting assistant deputy minister of capital planning—Capital Project Planning and Delivery Division, Cheryl Lashek.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Could the opposition critic please introduce their staff in attendance.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): We have with us today Mark Stewart, a member of PC caucus staff.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

* (15:10)

So, as previously stated, in accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Guenter: Wonder if the minister could talk about the underexpenditure by 17 per cent of the central capital budget. How is it that that number comes to be so low? And, more specifically, what are the absolute numbers in millions of dollars or billions of dollars that were not spent? So 17 per cent of—comes to what amount of money?

* (15:20)

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Borderland.

Mr. Guenter: Seeing as it's been over 10 minutes to get an answer to this question, and I respect the work of staff and the minister in trying to answer, you know, if he'd be amenable to taking it under advisement and getting back to us when he's able to do so, and then I'd pose another question for him.

MLA Sandhu: Sometimes, the project team works hard to be—sometimes, the project needs to be deferred into the next fiscal year for various reasons, for example, site conditions. Our capital team works hard to maximize the work completed each year, so I want to thank our CPPD team, all the hard work they are doing each and every day. This is an incredible team, and I'm lucky to be working with these folks.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: Okay, that was not exactly an answer to the question I had posed; I was asking about the budget in dollars.

What was the amount budgeted under the central capital—on page 35—the central capital budget? What's the—what is the central capital budget in terms of dollars?

And even if I could get that number that would be great, because I think that would—wouldn't be that hard to do the math and figure out what a 17 per cent underexpenditure looks like. But it'd be great to get the number—what that amount is.

And then also, while I have the opportunity: Which projects were—which specific projects were deferred until the next year that resulted in that 17 per cent underexpenditure? And, again, that's on page 35.

* (15:30)

MLA Sandhu: The information the member is looking for can be found on page 37 of '24-25 Estimates of Expenditure, which is a public document.

Mr. Guenter: Okay, well, I guess the minister wants to be difficult. I wasn't asking gotcha questions; I'm just looking for answers. But I can't get answers, and that's unfortunate.

How many above-guideline rent increase requests were received in the last year?

MLA Sandhu: There were 560 AGI applications received during 24-'25-26 fiscal year.

Mr. Guenter: How many of those above-guideline rent increase requests were approved in that same time period?

MLA Sandhu: In fiscal year 2025-26, 293 were approved.

Mr. Guenter: Oh, that's interesting. So that's—I'm doing rough math in my head. It was almost 600 requests received and almost 300 approved. So this NDP government is approving 50 per cent of all above-guideline rent increase requests in Manitoba. So that's interesting.

* (15:40)

When it comes to the residential tenancies board, what is the turnaround time for a request?

MLA Sandhu: Can the member be a little bit more specific on what kind of a turnaround time he's looking at RTB?

Mr. Guenter: Yes, so, just when someone submits a request, how long does it take to have that heard. And even appeals—how long does that take, for an appeal to be heard?

MLA Sandhu: We are still not clear what the member is asking. Can he be a little bit specific? Is it related to AGI? Is it related to turnaround time? On what matter is he looking for?

Mr. Guenter: I thought I mentioned it; maybe I didn't. But the residential tenancies board, when someone submits a request to the residential tenancies board for

an above-guideline rent increase. Maybe I completely missed that. I didn't think I had, but all right.

MLA Sandhu: The time it takes to process AGI applications can vary depending on how long it takes for the RTB to work with the landlord to verify expenses. Tenants also must be notified and given the chance to review the materials. The average time in '25-26 was 194.5 days.

* (15:50)

Mr. Guenter: I suggest the minister study his department more. I don't know how often he's meeting with his department staff, but he's got seven staff with him here today, and we're asking simple questions and it's taking close to 10 minutes, in some cases over 10 minutes, to get an answer to these simple questions.

He runs a department that is a very important file within government, and it's an important file to Manitobans, and, you know, Manitobans deserve to have a minister at the helm of this department that is competent, that is innovative and quick thinking and is—at the end of the day, knows his file. And I just think what we're seeing here today on public display is incredibly unfortunate.

When it comes to renters and the complaints that they may submit to the residential tenancies board, what's the response time there for the RTB to get back to renters?

MLA Sandhu: I do have a very—I know the member opposite doesn't respect the civil servants. This is what we have heard from—not once, even last time when we were here, this is what I heard from that member.

But, on the other hand, the NDP government do respect every civil servant, and we want to thank their services to Manitobans.

There were 35,000 phone calls and there were 25,000 emails and 16,000 people who just walked into the RTB office. It depends on the issue. It's varied by the issue—the response time.

Thank you.

Mr. Guenter: No, it's on Hansard. I—in fact, I think in one of my very first questions, I thanked the minister's staff for the work that they do.

So that's not what this is about. This is about the minister deliberately trying not to answer questions and stalling—killing time. I don't know why it's taking roughly 10 minutes, on average, to answer questions—basic questions—that the minister should have a ready knowledge of.

So, that's what this is about. This is about the minister's ability to answer questions in this public forum—you know, questions that Manitobans deserve an answer to. And that's what we're here to do today.

And I think it's unfortunate that the minister is not being forthcoming and transparent, kind of like his behaviour and the government's behaviour—this NDP government's behaviour—when it comes to the Manitoba jobs agreement, which has been shrouded in secrecy.

When did the minister purchase 366 Henry?

* (16:00)

MLA Sandhu: I'm more than happy to talk about the MJA if the member wants to go there. The only problem with the member is they don't study the bills and they don't want to listen to Manitoba workers, especially that member from Borderland. There—he was given a chance to learn about MJA, why they are good for Manitoba workers, why is it good for Manitoba economy. And I guess member just wants to collect a six-figure salary and go home. That's it. That's his—that's what he wants to do. I don't know—understand.

We will continue to listen to Manitoba workers and we will be there standing shoulder to shoulder with the Manitoba workers.

MJA is all about fair wages and safe working conditions, better benefits. And I have never met any person who doesn't want to make more money. But the member opposite, not even a single time, have mentioned or met someone that he can direct to me that someone want to make less money.

So I don't know why only purpose of this member is just to collect a six-figure salary, thank Donald Trump and Canada—want Canada to be part of the States, which will never happen. Their leader thanked Donald Trump for the tariffs, which is hurting Manitoba economy.

If we can go to the corruption the PCs are—had. We can go all the way to Premier Filmon—sold MTS, then became their board member, gets paid back. Heather Stefanson signed a contract with WestJet, become their board member later on. So what is this? This is what the PCs is.

Member from Red River North sits in the caucus. You know why is he's in the caucus? He's training the next MLAs how to trick Manitobans. That's what he's doing sitting in their caucus.

The building was purchased on August 22, 2025.

Mr. Guenter: Oh, that's too good. The minister's first words in that response was, if the member wants to talk about the MJA, I've got answers.

So, I have one simple question for him, and we'll be watching the clock and see how long it'll take him to answer this.

The question is: Where is this 85 cents per hour, per labourer that is being collected on public projects through the MJA, where is that money going? What's it being used for? That's the question.

* (16:10)

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Chair, I know the member has never been to a job site, so MJA is about fair wages, safer work sites, better benefits. We are training the workforce for the future. Manitobans want to see Churchill built, and we are training the workforce to do that.

There's a survey that came out the other day that 79 per cent of Manitobans want to see the Churchill project proceed, and we need the workers to do that, and we will continue to do that, train the workforce so they can build the Churchill. And we want to make sure that Manitobans are the ones who are building it.

We have seen previously from the Conservatives, they never trained the workforce for the future. They brought the workforce out of Saskatchewan and Alberta. But the NDP government is different than the Conservative. We are training our own workforce here. We are turning our construction site to training sites.

I don't know why the member wants to see workers get injured on job sites. Why doesn't he want to see a safer work site? That's what is in the MJA: having fair wages, benefits. Well, the member himself gets the benefits, but he doesn't want Manitoba workers to have that benefits. So we will continue to stand on the side of workers each and every day.

The BTBC remittance follow the same process as similar labour strategies and is included to support the administrative and labour relation function requiring—required under the MJA. This is mentioned throughout the first MJA in market and also included in all tendering documents.

So these funds support training and making sure workers are safe on site. Again, my question to the member is, why doesn't he want the workers to be safe? We know he has never visited on a work site.

And I encourage him to learn more about MJA. I encourage him to go talk to workers. And I will come down wherever the member asks.

Hey, you know what? I had just met someone here that, you know what? They want to make less money. I'll drive. Tell me the time. I'll drive over there. So I want to make—that's the offer to the member. And also offer to the members learn more about MJA.

Why this is good for Manitobans? I want the member to listen to workers. Since yesterday, since the question period, I have not seen a member ever mentioning about the workers, you know. So I want him to go out, talk to Manitoba workers, be on a construction site, be regular folks who go out and work. Listen to them; understand their issues.

This is really, really important, that they are safe with their families; they have a better pay so they can go out, spend in our economy. Our economy will improve as people get better pay and better benefit and they will spend in our own economy.

There were over 11,000 jobs created last month in Manitoba. Majority of those jobs were in construction industry, so I'm really, really happy for that. We are creating those jobs here in Manitoba so Manitoba workers don't have to go to other provinces—they don't have to go to Saskatchewan, they don't have to go to Alberta—so they can be here with their families, spend the weekend out in our beautiful parks and be healthy.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Mr. Guenter: No answer. The minister is going off on tangents. There's been no answer.

The minister expects us to believe that this 85 cent per hour, per worker surcharge—which, again, could go up. The clause in the Manitoba jobs agreement allows this government, through the Building Trades Manitoba, which are—which is their union allies—political allies—to raise that surcharge.

Well, let's just take that 85 cent surcharge that's there right now and apply that, because it will be applied to the four new schools that are supposed to be built. And that comes to \$250,000 collected in that fee on each school.

So over four schools, that's \$1 million. So, the minister expects us to believe that that \$1 million is for administration? For administering the project?

On top of—I mean, the construction industry's calling this surcharge—and they're the ones who actually build Manitoba, let's be clear about that.

So, they're the ones who are saying that this charge is entirely unprecedented. They've never seen anything like it. We've seen examples before in Manitoba: 20 years ago the NDP tried this and was a disaster, on the Red River Floodway. It was an absolute disaster: dragged out timelines—project timelines, ran up costs, chased bidders away—chased competition away.

We've seen this in BC just recently, where the NDP government there brought in their version of an MJA, which is—which they call a community benefits agreement. They always use Orwellian language—you notice that?

But—so these CBAs, they applied one—they applied them to a bridge project there—\$106-million project. And on that \$106 million, \$6.6 million was for the CBA fees, which happened to be the third largest line item on that project.

So this isn't an insignificant amount of money that, all of a sudden—and, like, for decades, the construction industry has built roads and bridges, schools and hospitals in Manitoba. And now in 2026, this NDP government comes in and says, we want to slap this charge on, and that money's supposed to go to administration and safety training. That's baloney; that's nonsense. Like, I—it just doesn't pass the smell test. And I think, to Manitoba taxpayers, you know, that doesn't pass the smell test.

And I think it's interesting, too, that the minister wants to talk about safety. Everyone wants a safe workplace. In fact, Manitoba construction work sites, for decades, have been very, very safe workplaces—very safe. In fact, the non-union shops—the open shops—are actually—have a better safety record than unionized work sites—workplaces.

And it's also interesting—and important for the minister to know this—that safety outcomes in the construction industry have been driven by industry-based safety programs. In fact, the unions will actually use—will actually utilize these safety programs that have been created by open-shop construction associations. In fact, two of the largest safety courses—WorkSafely, which is one, was created by Manitoba Heavy Construction Association. The Construction Safety Association of Manitoba was created by the Winnipeg Construction Association.

So the minister's, you know, going off on tangents, but nothing that he said actually holds up to the facts. And we still don't have any answers. We're expected to believe that the \$1 million they collect in this

fee across the four schools is supposed to go to administration.

* (16:20)

But I think what's most concerning is that this Manitoba jobs agreement has never been brought to this Legislature for a vote. It has never been brought before a legislative committee. No legislator has ever been able to have any debate or input or vote on the Manitoba jobs agreement. This is a secret deal cooked up at the Cabinet table by this minister, his NDP colleagues and their political allies in the Manitoba Building Trades.

MLA Sandhu: I think member from Agassiz—I mean, sorry—member from Borderland—doesn't have any more questions. I see the member from Agassiz has the floor on the opposite side. I'm looking forward to her questions related to our Estimates.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I want to thank the minister for giving us some information here today.

I am going to—we have a number of questions that I would like to get to, but I want to start with mine and be more specific to my constituency and Agassiz and more the town of Neepawa.

It was our government that introduced a new—not only the new hospital, but a new school as well, and I'm just wondering if the minister can give us an update on what the status is of that new school. I know it's been in the—in your plans as well.

I'm just wondering where it is on the priority list. When can we expect some shovels in the ground to see that new school—that new vocational school in Neepawa start?

MLA Sandhu: My department works with many different departments. We deliver their capitals, and I'm very happy to share that we are building 11 new schools. Those schools are Devonshire Park, and thanks to the hard work for the MLA from Radisson. You know, they want to update that school to a bigger school, and we listened to her and we listened to her community and we listened to the school division. So that school's supposed to be 675 students, but we are building it up to a capacity of 800; Prairie Pointe school, also the hard work of our MLA from Waverley and the school division.

And we will be building a school in Meadowlands, and the hard-working MLA from McPhillips, and, you know, he's opening one school this year, and this is going to be the next one. I'm so happy for him. He's a really, really hard-working MLA.

And we are building Brandon Southwest school as well. So—and also we'll be building a new French school in Brandon. Ste. Anne's regional high school: that's also on—one of them. Bridgwater Lakes school, again, our MLA from Waverley's working really, really hard on. You know, he wants to see more schools built in his community.

All these schools that we are building, like, K to 8, I'm very happy to say that, talking to the Minister of Education and talking to the communities, they want to have play structures with all those schools. You know, the previous government, they never built those play structures, and we will be building play structures with all the schools, so.

And, you know, yes, Neepawa regional high school is also on the list. Highland Pointe school, also another; Seven Oaks, you know, and there's a school that will be built on King Edward Street, which is the high school, and a new French school in Winnipeg—St. Boniface MLA, hard-working MLA—there's another one we are building it.

So, if I can maybe directly answer the question to the member, again, we deliver their capital for the different departments, but that question might be better directed at the Education Department.

Ms. Byram: So, the minister isn't able to give me a timeline or where that school is in terms of priority for this NDP government. So, seeing no answer in that, I'm going to move on, and maybe we can get an answer in our next question here.

So, in June of 2025, The Buy Canadian Act passed, but it's not reflected in the minister's Estimate books here, and—despite them talking about the procurement processes. I'm just wondering: Can the minister—and, hopefully, this can be a straightforward question—can the minister table a copy of the policy that he was legally required to produce and establish in relation to The Buy Canadian Act that was passed last year in June of 2025?

* (16:30)

MLA Sandhu: In response to evolving international trade dynamics, the government of Manitoba has introduced a series of measures in the form of preference clauses and exemption approval in order to support Manitoba and Canadian businesses in participating in public procurement and to help diversify our supply base.

In March 2025, Manitoba government introduced The Buy Canadian Act by amending The Government Purchases Act, establishing the legislative authority to

develop a provincial buy Canadian policy for core government goods procurement. The Government of Canada implemented their BCP framework on December 16, 2025. The framework is designed to strengthen the Canadian supply chain by prioritizing Canadian suppliers, strategically incorporating Canadian content and promoting the use of Canadian material in federal procurement.

Public Service Delivery is developing Manitoba's buy Canadian policy to strengthen our supply chain and support Manitoba and Canadian businesses through a team Canada approach. The policy will continue to strengthen national economy while remaining grounded in Manitoba's legislative framework, procurement objective and market condition.

Manitoba has operated its procurement approach by incorporating preference clauses in our tenders, prioritizing Canadian and non-US suppliers, Canadian and non-US construction products, as well as Canadian steel where it is feasible. Manitoba has also implemented the US contract exemption approval process to help ensure viable alternatives and government priorities are considered before awarding a contract to US suppliers.

In October 2025, Manitoba collaborated with the public-sector entity to deliver the first Manitoba public procurement conference to improve transparency in public procurement process and help Indigenous, local and small businesses identify and pursue public sector procurement opportunities. Manitoba is taking a co-ordinated whole-of-government approach to develop our BCP by consulting with the relevant departments to advance Manitoba's strategic sector and accelerating policy implementation.

This is also very, very important, honourable Chair, and because what we have heard from the PC leader that—where he wants to thank Donald Trump, and this is where our business—Canadian businesses, Manitoba businesses will be heard, because he's thanking Donald Trump for the tariffs that he's putting on Canadians and Manitobans.

Our approach is different, honourable Chair. We will continue to listen to Manitoba businesses and we will also work with our other provinces as well as federal government. I'm sure their priorities also pretty similar the way we are seeing it here. We want to prioritize our own businesses here. It's very, very important that we always work with local suppliers, Canadian companies and—so they can create good-paying jobs here in Manitoba and in Canada.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Ms. Byram: So I guess the answer to that is no, you can't table the policy that you are legally required to do.

* (16:40)

But moving forward, I do have another question, and, again this is going to be in relation to The Buy Canadian Act, that of which has not been proclaimed. And, you know, the minister's talking about Donald Trump in the US, and we see contracts going south of the border. We know people are leaving Manitoba. There is no—nothing here to support new business, build the economy.

Again, Buy Canadian Act has not been proclaimed. Is that why this government is sending so many contracts south to the US border? That's a yes or no answer.

MLA Sandhu: You know, the—we have heard from PC Leader thanking Donald Trump for the tariffs. And even—they were in power for seven and a half years; they never brought any policy or bill that will prioritize Canadian companies. All they were doing is sending the contracts to the south. They really never tried to develop our own supply chain here.

You know, we have to always look for the south, but it has been changed under our government. In '25-26, we reduced new contracts to the US by 31 per cent. That's last year, '25-26. So this is huge.

Again, we are—introduced preference clauses in our bids to prioritize Canadian companies, even if—like, we are giving a little bit more information to the companies. Even though they are Manitoba companies, smaller companies, they want to bid. Even if one Manitoba company won the contract or the second Manitoba company failed their bid, our department is there to offer them the support, so they will learn a little bit how they failed that bid and how can they be successful next time. So this is really, really important.

Again, the Conservatives' focus was always sending those contracts to the south, and our focus is keeping them here. And it was the first time in the history of Manitoba, thanks to the team from procurement and supply chain, we hosted the conference—procurement conference—and it was sold out; over 500 attendees.

You know, to this day people are talking about: Hey, you know, when are you—can host the next one because it went so well. People learned so much how to bid our own contracts here. So this is something—

our government always will prioritize Canadian companies.

Again, reducing the spend on the contracts by 31 per cent, that's huge. Again, Conservatives never even tried to do that. They never even brought a bill or they never even had the policies. They were just signing the contracts to the southern—south of us. I was very happy to say that we also brought in—a contract back to Canada where the Conservatives sent that contract all the way to a Texas company for the park passes. I'm very happy to report that that's in Manitoba now.

So our own—keeping the work here instead of sending it to the south—sending that money to the south. Now—and there are lots of Manitobans who enjoy parks; I love—enjoy going to the parks as well, spending those nights. Sometimes you can't make it, you want to cancel it, but they still charge you money for cancelling services.

* (16:50)

So, again, that was their record, and under us the contract is back in Canada, back in Manitoba. So, we will continue to prioritize Manitobans and Canadian companies.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): So, I've been sitting in the Chamber listening to the Estimates of the Minister for the Public Service Delivery, the MLA for Maples, for quite some time here. And I have to say that I like to think that I've had a good working relationship with the minister for The Maples and, of course, his predecessor, Mohinder Saran as well. I've had a good working relationship with him.

It's interesting that the \$36-million contract from Manitoba is going to companies in President Trump's economy, and it seems that the minister seems to be okay with it. But I think that's more what his boss, the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Kinew) wants him to say. So we'll give him a little bit of leeway on that.

I'm going to ask a fairly friendly question, I guess, which should be easy to answer just because it's something that I believe affects all Manitobans.

And I just wanted to ask, because I've been wanting to ask this question for a while, so I appreciate the time afforded to me by my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Agassiz, who had asked the question about a school which was, you know, supposed to be built in her constituency.

But it's unfortunate that the member—the minister can't answer the timeline or when that school's going to be built as a technical vocational school in her constituency.

So, here we go with the question: So it's in regards to permanent alterations to this building. We know that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) had gone about trying to, for the sake of a photo op, went and basically tried to—not tried; he went and physically drilled holes into the front of the Manitoba Legislature to hang a Canadian flag.

Now, we're all about the monarchy and our flag and our, you know, being consistent and definitely loving this great country of ours, but I do believe that there is—decisions regarding this building are supposed to be made through the Legislative Assembly management committee—Legislative Assembly Management Commission.

So, can the minister answer where he got the authorization—this minister—this Minister of Public Service Delivery—to drill holes into the people's building so the Premier could do a photo op with the Canadian flag, and can you give me the date as well? Would be great. And where you received that permission.

MLA Sandhu: I want to thank the member for the question. And I'm going to touch both parts: the Aramark Canada contract and as well as the Legislature Building.

You know, I remember being appointed to this position and the first meeting I had with the previous minister. She pointed me, you know, you will be the new owner of this building—which is people's building. And I have to take care of this building on behalf of all the people in Manitoba. And, you know, we open the building for folks to visit. And especially Christmastime, you know, lots of people come and enjoy this historical building. And this is our job to keep that building up to date and open to the public.

This is a direction from the Premier; this is also my belief—that this building should be open to everyone because this is people's building. And that is so nice to see so many diverse communities come in and having so many events in this building.

So I want to talk about—a little bit about the Aramark Canada, is—this is a Canadian company. They employ over 13,000 Canadians and over 200 Manitobans. The contract the member was talking about was publicly tendered and open to all the bidders, including Manitoba companies. Our government is buying Canadian more than the PCs ever did. So, that's the record. It's already seen, 31 per cent less contracts to the States. So, PCs only want to thank Donald Trump.

And I want to quickly—maybe I have only one minute—I want to let the member know how the process works for the procurement. The value of the contract has not increased—\$12 million was used as a placeholder for the first year while demand was still being assessed.

Now that the \$12 million is confirmed, the agreement has been updated to reflect the estimated total spent over three years. It is simple math, honourable Chair. Three times 12 is 36. This is a very standard procurement process.

So, again, the Conservatives spent thanking Donald Trump all these years, and they never did anything for Manitoba companies. All they did was send all the contracts over.

The Chairperson: Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

And call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 4.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 2026

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Committee Reports		Manitoba Jobs Agreement	
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development		Khan	1602
Second Report		Asagwara	1602
Compton	1593	Contract Awarded to US Company	
		Khan	1602
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		Asagwara	1603
Fifth Report		Number of Paramedics Hired	
Loiselle	1594	Khan	1603
		Asagwara	1603
Tabling of Reports		Manitoba's Regulatory Environment	
Lindsey	1596	Narth	1604
Ministerial Statements		Moses	1604
Week of the Early Childhood Educator		Assault Near Safe Consumption Site	
Schmidt	1596	Bereza	1605
Ewasko	1597	Wiebe	1605
Groupe des Ambassadeurs et Ambassadrices francophones d'Ottawa		Mobile Overdose Prevention Site	
Simard	1597	Bereza	1606
Ewasko	1598	Wiebe	1606
Members' Statements		Safe Consumption Sites	
Ste. Anne Students' Questions for Government		Balcaen	1606
Lagassé	1599	Wiebe	1606
Times Change(d) High & Lonesome Club		Post-Secondary Education	
Asagwara	1599	Hiebert	1607
Cowboys Mud Racing		Cable	1607
Narth	1600	Francophone Community in Manitoba	
Henry Guimond		Loiselle	1608
Bushie	1600	Simard	1609
Darcy Malcolm		Canada-Manitoba Child-Care Agreement	
Kostyshyn	1601	Ewasko	1609
		Schmidt	1609
Oral Questions		Canada-Manitoba Child-Care Agreement	
Residential Tenancies Amendment Act		Robbins	1610
Khan	1601	Schmidt	1610
Asagwara	1602		

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Room 254

Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation

Narth 1612

Moses 1612

Room 255

Justice

Ewasko 1628

Wiebe 1629

Balcaen 1629

Wasyliw 1635

Chamber

Public Service Delivery

Sandhu 1639

Guenter 1640

Byram 1643

Ewasko 1645

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